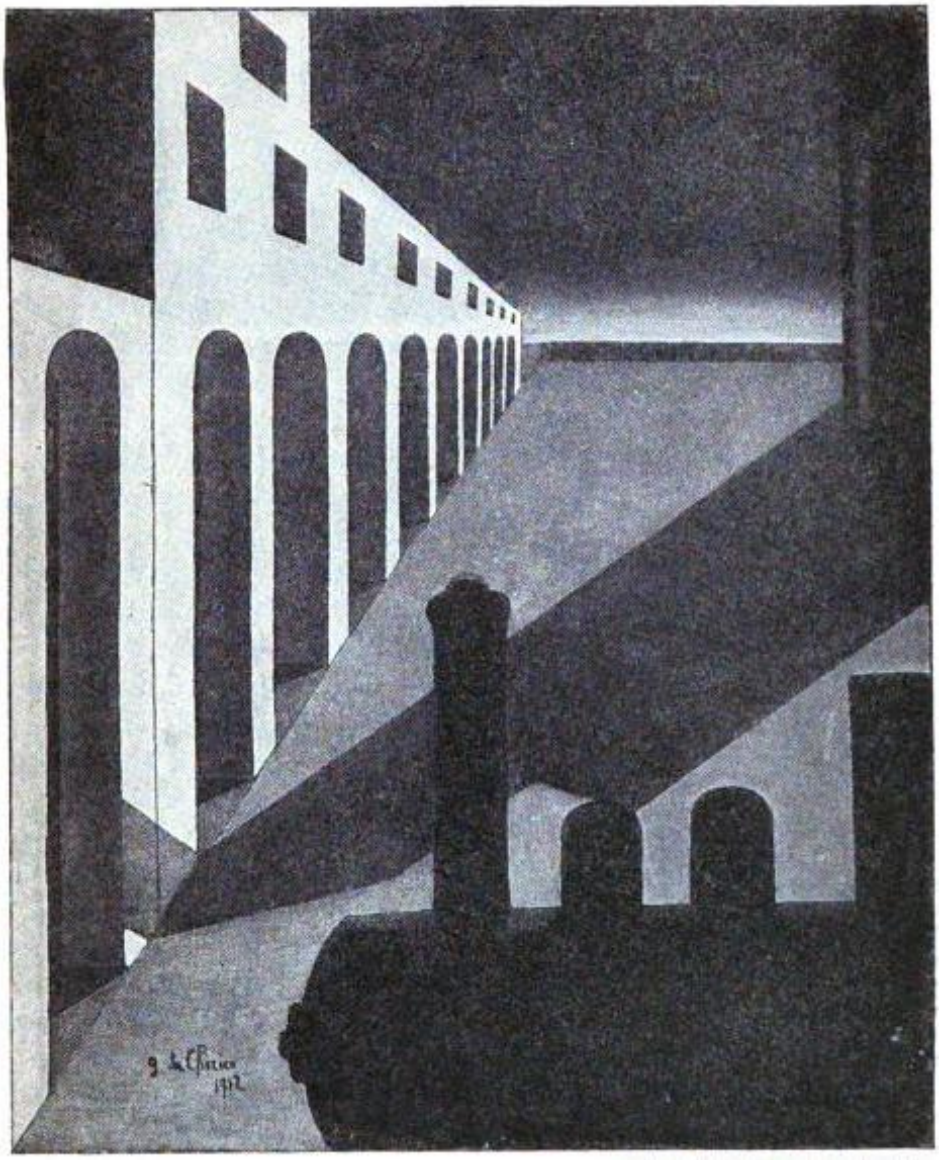
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November 2016



Le Matinee, by de Chirico (1912)

A BAD DAY FOR VERMIN

BY KEITH LAUMER

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They came In friendship and love.
They couldn't help the way they looked!

Judge Carter Gates of the Third Circuit Court finished his chicken salad on whole wheat, thoughtfully crumpled the waxed paper bag and turned to drop it in the waste basket behind his chair--and sat transfixed.

Through his second-floor office window, he saw a forty-foot flower-petal shape of pale turquoise settling gently between the well-tended petunia beds on the courthouse lawn. On the upper, or stem end of the vessel, a translucent pink panel popped up and a slender, graceful form not unlike a large violet caterpillar undulated into view.

Judge Gates whirled to the telephone. Half an hour later, he put it to the officials gathered with him in a tight group on the lawn.

"Boys, this thing is intelligent; any fool can see that. It's putting together what my boy assures me is some kind of talking machine, and any minute now it's going to start communicating. It's been twenty minutes since I notified Washington on this thing. It won't be long before somebody back there decides this is top secret and slaps a freeze on us here that will make the Manhattan Project look like a publicity campaign. Now, I say this is the biggest thing that ever happened to Plum County--but if we don't aim to be put right out of the picture, we'd better move fast."

"What you got in mind, Jedge?"

"I propose we hold an open hearing right here in the courthouse, the minute that thing gets its gear to working. We'll put it on the air--Tom Clembers from the radio station's already stringing wires, I see. Too bad we've got no TV equipment, but Jody Hurd has a movie

camera. We'll put Willow Grove on the map bigger'n Cape Canaveral ever was."

"We're with you on that, Carter!"

Ten minutes after the melodious voice of the Fianna's translator had requested escort to the village headman, the visitor was looking over the crowded courtroom with an expression reminiscent of a St. Bernard puppy hoping for a romp. The rustle of feet and throat-clearing subsided and the speaker began:

"People of the Green World, happy the cycle--"

Heads turned at the clump of feet coming down the side aisle; a heavy-torsoed man of middle age, bald, wearing a khaki shirt and trousers and rimless glasses and with a dark leather holster slapping his hip at each step, cleared the end of the front row of seats, planted himself, feet apart, yanked a heavy nickel-plated .44 revolver from the holster, took aim and fired five shots into the body of the Fianna at a range of ten feet.

The violet form whipped convulsively, writhed from the bench to the floor with a sound like a wet fire hose being dropped, uttered a gasping twitter, and lay still. The gunman turned, dropped the pistol, threw up his hands, and called:

"Sheriff Hoskins, I'm puttin' myself in yer pertective custody."

* * * * *

There was a moment of stunned silence; then a rush of spectators for the alien. The sheriff's three-hundred-and-nine-pound bulk bellied through the shouting mob to take up a stand before the khaki-clad man.

"I always knew you was a mean one, Cecil Stump," he said, unlimbering handcuffs, "ever since I seen you makin' up them ground-glass baits for Joe Potter's dog. But I never thought I'd see you turn to cold-blooded murder." He waved at the bystanders. "Clear a path through here; I'm takin' my prisoner over to the jail."

"Jest a dad-blamed minute, Sheriff." Stump's face was pale, his glasses were gone and one khaki shoulder strap dangled--but what was almost a grin twisted one meaty cheek. He hid his hands behind his back, leaned away from the cuffs. "I don't like that word 'prisoner'. I ast you fer pertection. And better look out who you go throwin' that word 'murder' off at, too. I ain't murdered nobody."

The sheriff blinked, turned to roar, "How's the victim, Doc?"

A small gray head rose from bending over the limp form of the Fianna. "Deader'n a mackerel, Sheriff."

"I guess that's it. Let's go, Cecil."

"What's the charge?"

"First degree murder."

"Who'd I murder?"

"Why, you killed this here ... this stranger."

"That ain't no stranger. That's a varmint. Murder's got to do with killin' humerns, way I understand it. You goin' to tell me that thing's humern?"

Ten people shouted at once:

"--human as I am!"

"--intelligent being!"

"--tell me you can simply kill--"

"--must be some kind of law--"

The sheriff raised his hands, his jowls drawn down in a scowl. "What about it, Judge Gates? Any law against Cecil Stump killing the ... uh...?"

The judge thrust out his lower lip. "Well, let's see," he began. "Technically--"

"Good Lord!" someone blurted. "You mean the laws on murder don't define what constitutes--I mean, what--"

"What a humern is?" Stump snorted. "Whatever it says, it sure-bob don't include no purple worms. That's a varmint, pure and simple. Ain't no different killin' it than any other critter."

"Then, by God, we'll get him for malicious damage," a man called. "Or hunting without a license--out of season!"

"--carrying concealed weapons!"

Stump went for his hip pocket, fumbled out a fat, shapeless wallet,

extracted a thumbed rectangle of folded paper, offered it.

"I'm a licensed exterminator. Got a permit to carry the gun, too. I ain't broken no law." He grinned openly now. "Jest doin' my job, Sheriff. And at no charge to the county."

* * * * *

A smaller man with bristly red hair flared his nostrils at Stump. "You blood-thirsty idiot!" He raised a fist and shook it. "We'll be a national disgrace--worse than Little Rock! Lynching's too good for you!"

"Hold on there, Weinstein," the sheriff cut in. "Let's not go gettin' no lynch talk started."

"Lynch, is it!" Cecil Stump bellowed, his face suddenly red. "Why, I done a favor for every man here! Now you listen to me! What is that thing over there?" He jerked a blunt thumb toward the judicial bench. "It's some kind of critter from Mars or someplace--you know that as well as me! And what's it here for? It ain't for the good of the likes of you and me, I can tell you that. It's them or us. And this time, by God, we got in the first lick!"

"Why you ... you ... hate-monger!"

"Now, hold on right there. I'm as liberal-minded as the next feller. Hell, I like a nigger--and I can't hardly tell a Jew from a white man. But when it comes to takin' in a damned purple worm and callin' it humern--that's where I draw the line."

Sheriff Hoskins pushed between Stump and the surging front rank of the crowd. "Stay back there! I want you to disperse, peaceably, and let the law handle this."

"I reckon I'll push off now, Sheriff," Stump hitched up his belt. "I figgered you might have to calm 'em down right at first, but now they've had a chance to think it over and see I ain't broken no law, ain't none of these law-abiding folks going to do anything illegal--like tryin' to get rough with a licensed exterminator just doin' his job." He stooped, retrieved his gun.

"Here, I'll take that," Sheriff Hoskins said. "You can consider your gun license canceled--and your exterminatin' license, too."

Stump grinned again, handed the revolver over.

"Sure. I'm cooperative, Sheriff. Anything you say. Send it around to my

place when you're done with it." He pushed his way through the crowd to the corridor door.

"The rest of you stay put!" a portly man with a head of bushy white hair pushed his way through to the bench. "I'm calling an emergency Town Meeting to order here and now!"

* * * * *

He banged the gavel on the scarred bench top, glanced down at the body of the dead alien, now covered by a flag.

"Gentlemen, we've got to take fast action. If the wire services get hold of this before we've gone on record, Willow Grove'll be a blighted area."

"Look here, Willard," Judge Gates called, rising. "This--this mob isn't competent to take legal action."

"Never mind what's legal, Judge. Sure, this calls for Federal legislation--maybe a Constitutional amendment--but in the meantime, we're going to redefine what constitutes a person within the incorporated limits of Willow Grove!"

"That's the least we can do," a thin-faced woman snapped, glaring at Judge Gates. "Do you think we're going to set here and condone this outrage?"

"Nonsense!" Gates shouted. "I don't like what happened any better than you do--but a person--well, a person's got two arms and two legs and--"

"Shape's got nothing to do with it," the chairman cut in. "Bears walk on two legs! Dave Zawocky lost his in the war. Monkeys have hands."

"Any intelligent creature--" the woman started.

"Nope, that won't do, either; my unfortunate cousin's boy Melvin was born an imbecile, poor lad. Now, folks, there's no time to waste. We'll find it very difficult to formulate a satisfactory definition based on considerations such as these. However, I think we can resolve the question in terms that will form a basis for future legislation on the question. It's going to make some big changes in things. Hunters aren't going to like it--and the meat industry will be affected. But if, as it appears, we're entering into an era of contact with ... ah ... creatures from other worlds, we've got to get our house in order."

"You tell 'em, Senator!" someone yelled.

"We better leave this for Congress to figger out!" another voice insisted.

"We got to do something...."

The senator held up his hands. "Quiet, everybody. There'll be reporters here in a matter of minutes. Maybe our ordinance won't hold water. But it'll start 'em thinking--and it'll make a lots better copy for Willow Grove than the killing."

"What you got in mind, Senator?"

"Just this:" the Senator said solemnly. "A person is ... _any harmless creature_...."

Feet shuffled. Someone coughed.

"What about a man who commits a violent act, then?" Judge Gates demanded. "What's he, eh?"

"That's obvious, gentlemen," the senator said flatly. "He's vermin."

* * * * *

On the courthouse steps Cecil Stump stood, hands in hip pockets, talking to a reporter from the big-town paper in Mattoon, surrounded by a crowd of late-comers who had missed the excitement inside. He described the accuracy of his five shots, the sound they had made hitting the big blue snake, and the ludicrous spectacle the latter had presented in its death agony. He winked at a foxy man in overalls picking his nose at the edge of the crowd.

"Guess it'll be a while 'fore any more damned reptiles move in here like they owned the place," he concluded.

The courthouse doors banged wide; excited citizens poured forth, veering aside from Cecil Stump. The crowd around him thinned, broke up as its members collared those emerging with the hot news. The reporter picked a target.

"Perhaps you'd care to give me a few details of the action taken by the ... ah ... Special Committee, sir?"

Senator Custis pursed his lips. "A session of the Town Council was called," he said. "We've defined what a person is in this town--"

Stump, standing ten feet away, snorted. "Can't touch me with no _ex post factory_ law."

"--and also what can be classified as vermin," Custis went on.

Stump closed his mouth with a snap.

"Here, that s'posed to be some kind of slam at me, Custis? By God, come election time...."

Above, the door opened again. A tall man in a leather jacket stepped out, stood looking down. The crowd pressed back. Senator Custis and the reporter moved aside. The newcomer came down the steps slowly. He carried Cecil Stump's nickel-plated .44 in his hand.

Standing alone now, Stump watched him.

"Here," he said. His voice carried a sudden note of strain. "Who're you?"

The man reached the foot of the steps, raised the revolver and cocked it with a thumb.

"I'm the new exterminator," he said.

Indifference

BY MARX G. SABEL

I have grown too wise
To mutter curses,
I have seen too many eyes,
Too many hearses—

I have seen the one I love
Sleep, and wake, and move!

The Tree and the Reed

Aesop
the SECOND Project Gutenberg Etext

"Well, little one," said a Tree to a Reed that was growing at its foot, "why do you not plant your feet deeply in the ground, and raise your head boldly in the air as I do?"

"I am contented with my lot," said the Reed. "I may not be so

grand, but I think I am safer."

"Safe!" sneered the Tree. "Who shall pluck me up by the roots or bow my head to the ground?" But it soon had to repent of its boasting, for a hurricane arose which tore it up from its roots, and cast it a useless log on the ground, while the little Reed, bending to the force of the wind, soon stood upright again when the storm had passed over.

Obscurity often brings safety.



Bulimus citrinus

XVII. THE VENOMOUS WORM.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of McGuffey's Fifth Eclectic Reader
by William Holmes McGuffey

John Russell (b. 1793, d. 1863) graduated at Middlebury College, Vt., in 1818. He was at one time editor of the "Backwoodsman," published at Grafton, Ill., and later of the "Louisville Advocate." He was the author

of many tales of western adventure and of numerous essays, sketches, etc. His language is clear, chaste, and classical; his style concise, vigorous, and sometimes highly ornate.

1. Who has not heard of the rattlesnake or copperhead? An unexpected sight of either of these reptiles will make even the lords of creation recoil; but there is a species of worm, found in various parts of this country, which conveys a poison of a nature so deadly that, compared with it, even the venom of the rattlesnake is harmless. To guard our readers against this foe of human kind is the object of this lesson.

2. This worm varies much in size. It is frequently an inch in diameter, but, as it is rarely seen except when coiled, its length can hardly be conjectured. It is of a dull lead color, and generally lives near a spring or small stream of water, and bites the unfortunate people who are in the habit of going there to drink. The brute creation it never molests. They avoid it with the same instinct that teaches the animals of India to shun the deadly cobra.

3. Several of these reptiles have long infested our settlements, to the misery and destruction of many of our fellow citizens. I have, therefore, had frequent opportunities of being the melancholy spectator of the effects produced by the subtile poison which this worm infuses.

4. The symptoms of its bite are terrible. The eyes of the patient become red and fiery, his tongue swells to an immoderate size, and obstructs his utterance; and delirium of the most horrid character quickly follows. Sometimes, in his madness, he attempts the destruction of his nearest friends.

5. If the sufferer has a family, his weeping wife and helpless infants are not unfrequently the objects of his frantic fury. In a word, he exhibits, to the life, all the detestable passions that rankle in the bosom of a savage; and such is the spell in which his senses are locked, that no sooner has the unhappy patient recovered from the paroxysm of insanity occasioned by the bite, than he seeks out the destroyer for the sole purpose of being bitten again.

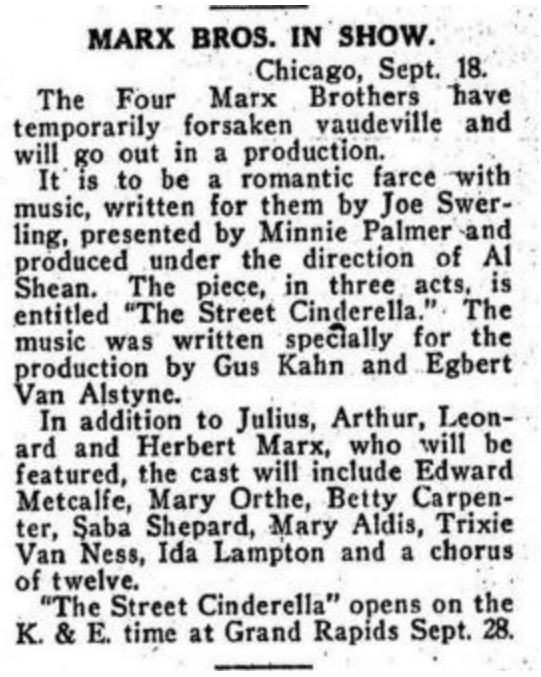
6. I have seen a good old father, his locks as white as snow, his step slow and trembling, beg in vain of his only son to quit the lurking place of the worm. My heart bled when he turned away; for I knew the fond hope that his son would be the "staff of his declining years," had supported him through many a sorrow.

7. Youths of America, would you know the name of this reptile? It is called the WORM OF THE STILL.

DEFINITIONS.--1. Rep'tiles, animals that crawl, as snakes, liz-ards, etc. Re-coil', to start back, to shrink from. 2. Co'bra, a highly venomous reptile inhabiting the East Indies. In-fest'ed, troubled, annoyed. 3. Sub'tile, acute, piercing. In-fus'es, intro-duces. 4. Ob-structs', hinders. De-lir'i-um, a wandering of the mind. 5. Ran'kle, to rage. Par'ox-ysm, a fit, a convulsion. 7. Worm, a spiral metallic pipe used in distilling liquors. Still, a vessel used in distilling or making liquors.



DUMAS SALAD (Devised by Alexandre Dumas).--"Put in a salad-bowl a yolk of egg boiled hard; add a tablespoonful of oil, and make a paste of it; then add a few stalks of chervil chopped fine, a teaspoonful each of tunny and anchovy paste, a little French mustard, a small pickled cucumber chopped fine, the white of the egg chopped fine, and a little soy. Mix the whole well with two tablespoonfuls of wine vinegar; then add two or three steamed potatoes sliced, a few slices of beet, same of celeriac, same of rampion, salt and Hungarian pepper to taste; toss gently twenty minutes, then serve."
(source: The Project Gutenberg EBook of Fifty Salads, by Thomas Jefferson Murrey)



MARX BROS. IN SHOW.

Chicago, Sept. 18.

The Four Marx Brothers have temporarily forsaken vaudeville and will go out in a production.

It is to be a romantic farce with music, written for them by Joe Swerling, presented by Minnie Palmer and produced under the direction of Al Shean. The piece, in three acts, is entitled "The Street Cinderella." The music was written specially for the production by Gus Kahn and Egbert Van Alstyne.

In addition to Julius, Arthur, Leonard and Herbert Marx, who will be featured, the cast will include Edward Metcalfe, Mary Orthe, Betty Carpenter, Saba Shepard, Mary Aldis, Trixie Van Ness, Ida Lampton and a chorus of twelve.

"The Street Cinderella" opens on the K. & E. time at Grand Rapids Sept. 28.

XIX. JACK LONDON

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Prejudices, First Series* , by H. L. (Henry Louis) Mencken

The quasi-science of genealogy, as it is practiced in the United States, is directed almost exclusively toward establishing aristocratic descents for nobodies. That is to say, it records and glorifies decay. Its typical masterpiece is the discovery that the wife of some obscure county judge is the grandchild, infinitely removed, of Mary Queen of Scots, or that the blood of Geoffrey of Monmouth flows in the veins of a Philadelphia stockbroker. How much more profitably its professors might be employed in tracing the lineage of truly salient and distinguished men! For example, the late Jack London. Where did he get his hot artistic passion, his delicate feeling for form and color, his extraordinary skill with words? The man, in truth, was an instinctive artist of a high order, and if ignorance often corrupted his art, it only made the fact of his inborn mastery the more remarkable. No other popular writer of his time did any better writing than you will find in "The Call of the Wild," or in parts of "John Barleycorn," or in such short stories as "The Sea Farmer" and "Samuel." Here, indeed, are all the elements of sound fiction: clear thinking, a sense of character, the dramatic instinct, and, above all, the adept putting together of words—words charming and slyly significant, words arranged, in a French phrase, for the respiration and the ear. You will never convince me that this æsthetic sensitiveness, so rare, so precious, so distinctively aristocratic, burst into abiogenetic flower on a San Francisco sand-lot. There must have been some intrusion of an alien and superior strain, some _pianissimo_ fillup from above; there was obviously a great deal more to the thing than a routine hatching in low life. Perhaps the explanation is to be sought in a Jewish smear. Jews were not few in the California of a generation ago, and one of them, at least, attained to a

certain high, if transient, fame with the pen. Moreover, the name, London, has a Jewish smack; the Jews like to call themselves after great cities. I have, indeed, heard this possibility of an Old Testament descent put into an actual rumor. Stranger genealogies are not unknown in seaports....

But London the artist did not live _a cappella_. There was also London the amateur Great Thinker, and the second often hamstrung the first. That great thinking of his, of course, took color from the sordid misery of his early life; it was, in the main, a jejune Socialism, wholly uncriticised by humor. Some of his propagandist and expository books are almost unbelievably nonsensical, and whenever he allowed any of his so-called ideas to sneak into an imaginative work the intrusion promptly spoiled it. Socialism, in truth, is quite incompatible with art; its cook-tent materialism is fundamentally at war with the first principle of the æsthetic gospel, which is that one daffodil is worth ten shares of Bethlehem Steel. It is not by accident that there has never been a book on Socialism which was also a work of art. Papa Marx's "Das Kapital" at once comes to mind. It is as wholly devoid of graces as "The Origin of Species" or "Science and Health"; one simply cannot conceive a reasonable man reading it without aversion; it is as revolting as a barrel organ. London, preaching Socialism, or quasi-Socialism, or whatever it was that he preached, took over this offensive dullness. The materialistic conception of history was too heavy a load for him to carry. When he would create beautiful books he had to throw it overboard as Wagner threw overboard democracy, the superman and free thought. A sort of temporary Christian created "Parsifal." A sort of temporary aristocrat created "The Call of the Wild."

Also in another way London's early absorption of social and economic nostrums damaged him as an artist. It led him into a socialistic exaltation of mere money; it put a touch of avarice into him. Hence his too deadly industry, his relentless thousand words a day, his steady emission of half-done books. The prophet of freedom, he yet sold himself into slavery to the publishers, and paid off with his soul for his ranch, his horses, his trappings of a wealthy cheese-monger. His volumes rolled out almost as fast as those of E. Phillips Oppenheim; he simply could not make them perfect at such a gait. There are books on his list—for example, "The Scarlet Plague" and "The Little Lady of the Big House"—that are little more than garrulous notes for books.

But even in the worst of them one comes upon sudden splashes of brilliant color, stray proofs of the adept penman, half-wistful reminders that London, at bottom, was no fraud. He left enough, I am convinced, to keep him in mind. There was in him a vast delicacy of perception, a high feeling, a sensitiveness to beauty. And there was in him, too, under all his blatancies, a poignant sense of the infinite romance and mystery of human life.



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At the Rainbow's End

JACK LONDON

The God of His Fathers
And Other Stories
(located on Internet Archive's American Libraries)

IT was for two reasons that Montana Kid discarded his " chaps " and Mexican spurs, and shook the dust of the Idaho ranges from his feet. In the first place, the encroachments of a steady, sober, and sternly moral civilization had destroyed the primeval status of the western cattle ranges, and refined society turned the cold eye of disfavor upon him and his ilk. In the second place, in one of its cyclopean moments the race had arisen and shoved back its frontier several thousand miles. Thus, with unconscious foresight, did mature society make room for its adolescent members. True, the new territory was mostly barren ; but its several hundred thousand square miles of frigidity at least gave breathing space to those who else would have suffocated at home.

Montana Kid was such a one. Heading for the sea-coast, with a haste several sheriff's posses

might possibly have explained, and with more nerve than coin of the realm, he succeeded in shipping from a Puget Sound port, and managed to survive the contingent miseries of steerage sea-sickness and steerage grub. He was rather sallow and drawn, but still his own indomitable self, when he landed on the Dyea beach one day in the spring of the year. Between the cost of dogs, grub, and outfits, and the customs exactions of the two clashing governments, it speedily penetrated to his understanding that the Northland was anything save a poor man's Mecca. So he cast about him in search of quick harvests. Between the beach and the passes were scattered many thousands of passionate pilgrims. These pilgrims Montana Kid proceeded to farm. At first he dealt faro in a pine-board gambling shack; but disagreeable necessity forced him tp drop a sudden period into a man's life, and to move on up trail. Then he effected a corner in horseshoe nails, and they circulated at par with legal tender, four to the dollar, till an unexpected consignment of a hundred barrels or so broke the market and forced him to disgorge his stock at a loss. After that he located at Sheep Camp, organized the professional packers, and jumped the freight ten cents a pound in a single day. In token of their gratitude, the packers patronized his faro and roulette layouts and were mulcted cheerfully of their earnings. But his commercialism was of too lusty a growth to be long endured ; so they rushed him one night, burned his shanty, divided the bank, and headed him up the trail with empty pockets.

Ill-luck was his running mate. He engaged with responsible parties to run whisky across the line by way of precarious and unknown trails, lost his Indian guides, and had the very first outfit confiscated by the Mounted Police. Numerous other misfortunes tended to make him bitter of heart and wanton of action, and he celebrated his arrival at Lake Bennett by terrorizing the camp for twenty straight hours. Then a miners' meeting took him in hand, and commanded him to make himself scarce. He had a wholesome respect for such assemblages, and he obeyed in such haste that he inadvertently removed himself at the tail-end of another man's dog team. This was equivalent to horse-stealing in a more mellow clime, so he hit only the high places across Bennett and down Tagish, and made his first camp a full hundred miles to the north.

Now it happened that the break of spring was at hand, and many of the principal citizens of Daw-

son were travelling south on the last ice. These he met and talked with, noted their names and possessions, and passed on. He had a good memory, also a fair imagination ; nor was veracity one of his virtues.

Dawson, always eager for news, beheld Montana Kid's sled heading down the Yukon, and went out on the ice to meet him. No, he had n't any newspapers ; did n't know whether Durrant was hanged yet, nor who had won the Thanksgiving game ; had n't heard whether the United States and Spain had gone to fighting ; did n't know who Dreyfus was ; but O'Brien ? Had n't they heard ? O'Brien, why, he was drowned in the White Horse ; Sitka Charley the only one of the party who escaped. Joe Ladue ? Both legs frozen and amputated at the Five Fingers. And Jack Daiton ? Blown up on the " Sea Lion " with all hands. And Bettles ? Wrecked on the " Carthagina," in Seymour Narrows, twenty survivors out of three hundred. And Swiftwater Bill ? Gone through the rotten ice of Lake LeBarge with six female members of the opera troupe he was convoying. Governor Walsh ? Lost with all hands and eight sleds on the Thirty Mile. Devereaux ? Who was Devereaux ? Oh, the courier ! Shot by Indians on Lake Marsh.

So it went. The word was passed along. Men shouldered in to ask after friends and partners, and in turn were shouldered out, too stunned for blasphemy. By the time Montana Kid gained the bank he was surrounded by several hundred fur-clad miners. When he passed the Barracks he was the centre of a procession. At the Opera House he was the nucleus of an excited mob, each member struggling for a chance to ask after some absent comrade. On every side he was being invited to drink. Never before had the Klondike thus opened its arms to a che-cha-qua. All Dawson was humming. Such a series of catastrophes had never occurred in its history. Every man of note who had gone south in the spring had been wiped out. The cabins vomited forth their occupants. Wild-eyed men hurried down from the creeks and gulches to seek out this man who had told a tale of such disaster. The Russian half-breed wife of Bettles sought the fireplace, incpnsolable, and rocked back and forth, and ever and anon flung white wood-ashes upon her raven hair. The flag at the Barracks flopped dismally at half-mast. Dawson mourned its dead.

Why Montana Kid did this thing no man may

know. Nor beyond the fact that the truth was not in him, can explanation be hazarded. But for five whole days he plunged the land in wailing and sorrow, and for five whole days he was the only man in the Klondike. The country gave him its best of bed and board. The saloons granted him the freedom of their bars. Men sought him continuously. The high officials bowed down to him for further information, and he was feasted at the Barracks by Constantine and his brother officers. And then, one day, Devereaux, the government courier, halted his tired dogs before the gold commissioner's office. Dead ? Who said so ? Give him a moose steak and he 'd show them how dead he was. Why, Governor Walsh was in camp on the Little Salmon, and O'Brien coming in on the first water. Dead ? Give him a moose steak and he 'd show them.

And forthwith Dawson hummed. The Barracks' flag rose to the masthead, and Bettles' wife washed herself and put on clean raiment. The community subtly signified its desire that Montana Kid obliterate himself from the landscape. And Montana Kid obliterated ; as usual, at the tail-end of some one else's dog team. Dawson rejoiced when he headed down the Yukon, and wished him godspeed to the ultimate destination of the case-hardened sinner. After that the owner of the dogs bestirred himself, made complaint to Constantine, and from him received the loan of a policeman.

With Circle City in prospect and the last ice crumbling under his runners, Montana Kid took advantage of the lengthening days and travelled his dogs late and early. Further, he had but little doubt that the owner of the dogs in question had taken his trail, and he wished to make American territory before the river broke. But by the afternoon of the third day it became evident that he had lost in his race with spring. The Yukon was growling and straining at its fetters. Long detours became necessary, for the trail had begun to fall through into the swift current beneath, while the ice, in constant unrest, was thundering apart in great gaping fissures. Through these and through countless airholes, the water began to sweep across the surface of the ice, and by the time he pulled into a woodchopper's cabin on the point of an island, the dogs were being rushed off their feet and were swimming more often than not. He was greeted sourly by the two residents, but he unharnessed and proceeded to cook up. Donald and Davy were fair specimens of frontier inefficients. Canadian-born, city-bred Scots, in a

foolish moment they had resigned their counting-house desks, drawn upon their savings, and gone Klondiking. And now they were feeling the rough edge of the country. Grubless, spiritless, with a lust for home in their hearts, they had been staked by the P. C. Company to cut wood for its steamers, with the promise at the end of a passage home. Disregarding the possibilities of the ice-run, they had fittingly demonstrated their inefficiency by their choice of the island on which they located. Montana Kid, though possessing little knowledge of the break-up of a great river, looked about him dubiously, and cast yearning glances at the distant bank where the towering bluffs promised immunity from all the ice of the Northland.

After feeding himself and dogs, he lighted his pipe and strolled out to get a better idea of the situation. The island, like all its river brethren, stood higher at the upper end, and it was here that Donald and Davy had built their cabin and piled many cords of wood. The far shore was a full mile away, while between the island and the near shore lay a back-channel perhaps a hundred yards across. At first sight of this, Montana Kid was tempted to take his dogs and escape to the mainland, but on closer inspection he discovered a rapid current flooding on top. Below, the river twisted sharply to the west, and in this turn its breast was studded by a maze of tiny islands.

"That's where she'll jam," he remarked to himself.

Half a dozen sleds, evidently bound up-stream to Dawson, were splashing through the chill water to the tail of the island. Travel on the river was passing from the precarious to the impossible, and it was nip and tuck with them till they gained the island and came up the path of the wood-choppers toward the cabin. One of them, snow-blind, towed helplessly at the rear of a sled. Husky young fellows they were, rough-garmented and trail-worn, yet Montana Kid had met the breed before and knew at once that it was not his kind.
" Hello ! How J s things up Dawson-way ? " queried the foremost, passing his eye over Donald and Davy and settling it upon the Kid.
A first meeting in the wilderness is not characterized by formality. The talk quickly became general, and the news of the Upper and Lower Countries was swapped equitably back and forth.

But the little the new-comers had was soon over

with, for they had wintered at Minook, a thousand miles below, where nothing was doing. Montana Kid, however, was fresh from Salt Water, and they annexed him while they pitched camp, swamping him with questions concerning the outside, from which they had been cut off for a twelvemonth.

A shrieking split, suddenly lifting itself above the general uproar on the river, drew everybody to the bank. The surface water had increased in depth, and the ice, assailed from above and below, was struggling to tear itself from the grip of the shores. Fissures reverberated into life before their eyes, and the air was filled with multitudinous crackling, crisp and sharp, like the sound that goes up on a clear day from the firing line.

From up the river two men were racing a dog team toward them on an uncovered stretch of ice. But even as they looked, the pair struck the water and began to flounder through. Behind, where their feet had sped the moment before, the ice broke up and turned turtle. Through this opening the river rushed out upon them to their waists, burying the sled and swinging the dogs off at right angles in a drowning tangle. But the men stopped their flight to give the animals a righting chance, and they groped hurriedly in the cold confusion, slashing at the detaining traces with their sheath-knives. Then they fought their way to the bank through swirling water and grinding ice, where, foremost in leaping to the rescue among the jarring fragments, was the Kid.

" Why, blime me, if it ain't Montana Kid ! " exclaimed one of the men whom the Kid was just placing upon his feet at the top of the bank. He wore the scarlet tunic of the Mounted Police and jocularly raised his right hand in salute.

" Got a warrant for you, Kid," he continued, drawing a bedraggled paper from his breast pocket, u an' I 'ope as you '11 come along peaceable." Montana Kid looked at the chaotic river and shrugged his shoulders, and the policeman, following his glance, smiled.

" Where are the dogs ? " his companion asked.
" Gentlemen," interrupted the policeman, " this 'ere mate o' mine is Jack Sutherland, owner of Twenty-Two Eldorado "

" Not . Sutherland of '92?" broke in the snow-blinded Minook man, groping feebly toward

him.

"The same." Sutherland gripped his hand.
"And you?"

"Oh, I'm after your time, but I remember you
in my freshman year, you were doing P. G.
work then. Boys," he called, turning half about,
" this is Sutherland, Jack Sutherland, erstwhile full-
back on the 'Varsity. Come up, you gold-chasers,
and fall upon him ! Sutherland, this is Greenwich,
played quarter two seasons back."
" Yes, I read of the game," Sutherland said, shak-
ing hands. " And I remember that big run of
yours for the first touchdown."

Greenwich flushed darkly under his tanned skin
and awkwardly made room for another.
" And here 's Matthews, Berkeley man. And
we've got some Eastern cracks knocking about,
too. Come up, you Princeton men ! Come up !
This is Sutherland, Jack Sutherland ! "

Then they fell upon him heavily, carried him into
camp, and supplied him with dry clothes and
numerous mugs of black tea.

Donald and Davy, overlooked, had retired to their
nightly game of crib. Montana Kid followed
them with the policeman.

“Here, get into some dry togs," he said, pulling
them from out his scanty kit. u Guess you '11
have to bunk with me, too."

“ Well, I say, you 're a good 'un," the policeman
remarked as he pulled on the other man's socks.

" Sorry I 've got to take you back to Dawson,
but I only 'ope they won't be 'ard on you."

" Not so fast." The Kid smiled curiously.

" We ain't under way yet. When I go I 'm
going down river, and I guess the chances are
you '11 go along."

" Not if I know myself "

" Come on outside, and I '11 show you, then.

These damn fools," thrusting a thumb over his
shoulder at the two Scots, u played smash when
they located here. Fill your pipe, first this
is pretty good plug and enjoy yourself while

you can. You have n't many smokes before you."

The policeman went with him wonderingly, while Donald and Davy dropped their cards and followed. The Minook men noticed Montana Kid pointing now up the river, now down, and came over.

" What 's up ? " Sutherland demanded.
" Nothing much." Nonchalance sat well upon the Kid. " Just a case of raising hell and putting a chunk under. See that bend down there ? That 's where she '11 jam millions of tons of ice. Then she '11 jam in the bends up above, millions of tons. Upper jam breaks first, lower jam holds, pouf!" He dramatically swept the island with his hand. " Millions of tons," he added reflectively.
And what of the woodpiles ? " Davy questioned. The Kid repeated his sweeping gesture, and Davy wailed, " The labor of months ! It canna be ! Na, na, lad, it canna be. I doot not it 's a jowk. Ay, say that it is," he appealed.
But when the Kid laughed harshly and turned on his heel, Davy flung himself upon the piles and began frantically to toss the cordwood back from the bank.

" Lend a hand, Donald ! " he cried. " Can ye no lend a hand ? 'T is the labor of months and the passage home ! "

Donald caught him by the arm and shook him, but he tore free. " Did ye no hear, man ? Millions of tons, and the island shall be sweepit clean."

" Straighten yersel' up, man," said Donald. u It 's a bit fashed ye are."

But Davy fell upon the cordwood. Donald stalked back to the cabin, buckled on his money belt and Davy's, and went out to the point of the island where the ground was highest and where a huge pine towered above its fellows.

The men before the cabin heard the ringing of his axe and smiled. Greenwich returned from across the island with the word that they were penned in. It was impossible to cross the backchannel. The blind Minook man began to sing, and the rest joined in with

" Wonder if it 's true ?

Does it seem so to you ?
Seems to me he 's lying
Oh, I wonder if it 's tnie ? "

" It 's ay sinfu'," Davy moaned, lifting his head and watching them dance in the slanting rays of the sun. " And my guid wood a' going to waste."

" Oh, I wonder if it 's true,"
was flaunted back.

The noise of the river ceased suddenly. A strange calm wrapped about them. The ice had ripped from the shores and was floating higher on the surface of the river, which was rising. Up it came, swift and silent, for twenty feet, till the huge cakes rubbed softly against the crest of the bank. The tail of the island, being lower, was overrun. Then, without effort, the white flood started down-stream. But the sound increased with the momentum, and soon the whole island was shaking and quivering with the shock of the grinding bergs. Under pressure, the mighty cakes, weighing hundreds of tons, were shot into the air like peas. The frigid anarchy increased its riot, and the men had to shout into one another's ears to be heard. Occasionally the racket from the back channel could be heard above the tumult. The island shuddered with the impact of an enormous cake which drove in squarely upon its point. It ripped a score of pines out by the roots, then swinging around and over, lifted its muddy base from the bottom of the river and bore down upon the cabin, slicing the bank and trees away like a gigantic knife. It seemed barely to graze the corner of the cabin, but the cribbed logs tilted up like matches, and the structure, like a toy house, fell backward in ruin.

The labor of months ! The labor of months, and the passage home ! " Davy wailed, while Montana Kid and the policeman dragged him backward from the woodpiles.
" You '11 J ave plenty o' hoppertunity all in good time for yer passage 'ome," the policeman growled, clouting him alongside the head and sending him flying into safety.

Donald, from the top of the pine, saw the devastating berg sweep away the cordwood and disappear down-stream. As though satisfied with this damage, the ice-flood quickly dropped to its old level and began to slacken its pace. The noise likewise eased down, and the others could hear Donald shouting from his eyrie to look down-stream. As forecast,

the jam had come among the islands in the bend, and the ice was piling up in a great barrier which stretched from shore to shore. The river came to a standstill, and the water finding no outlet began to rise. It rushed up till the island was awash, the men splashing around up to their knees, and the dogs swimming to the ruins of the cabin. At this stage it abruptly became stationary, with no perceptible rise or fall.

Montana Kid shook his head. " It 's jammed above, and no more J s coming down."
" And the gamble is, which jam will break first," Sutherland added.

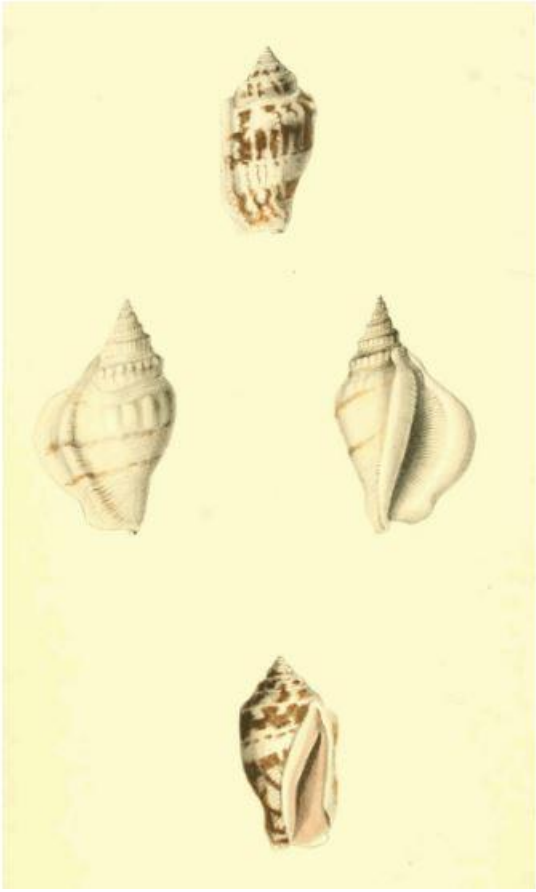
"Exactly," the Kid affirmed. "If the upper jam breaks first, we have n't a chance. Nothing will stand before it."

The Minook men turned away in silence, but soon " Rumsky Ho " floated upon the quiet air, followed by "The Orange and the Black."
Room was made in the circle for Montana Kid and the policeman, and they quickly caught the ringing rhythm of the choruses as they drifted on from song to song.

" Oh, Donald, will ye no lend a hand ? " Davy sobbed at the foot of the tree into which his comrade had climbed. " Oh, Donald, man, will ye no lend a hand ? " he sobbed again, his hands bleeding from vain attempts to scale the slippery trunk.

But Donald had fixed his gaze up river, and now his voice rang out, vibrant with fear ;

" God Almighty, here she comes ! "
Standing knee-deep in the icy water, the Minook men, with Montana Kid and the policeman, gripped hands and raised their voices in the terrible " Battle Hymn of the Republic." But the words were drowned in the advancing roar.
And to Donald was vouchsafed a sight such as no man may see and live. A great wall of white flung itself upon the island. Trees, dogs, men, were blotted out, as though the hand of God had wiped the face of nature clean. This much he saw, then swayed an instant longer in his lofty perch and hurtled far out into the frozen hell.



Strombus mutabilis

PROSPICE

Fear death? to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so--one fight more,
 The best and the last!

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
 And bade me creep past,
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
 The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest!

* * * * *

The Project Gutenberg EBook of **Browning's Shorter Poems**, by Robert Browning



SHEILA IN LONDON

From 'A Princess of Thule'
WILLIAM BLACK 1841-

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She asked if they were lords who owned those beautiful houses built up on the hill, and half-smothered among lilacs and ash-trees and rowan-trees and ivy.

"My darling," Lavender had said to her, "if your papa were to come and live here, he could buy half a dozen of these cottages, gardens and all. They are mostly the property of well-to-do shopkeepers. If this little place takes your fancy, what will you say when you go South--when you see Wimbledon and Richmond and Kew, with their grand old commons and trees? Why, you could hide Oban in a corner of Richmond Park!"

"And my papa has seen all these places?"

"Yes. Don't you think it strange he should have seen them all, and known he could live in any of them, and then gone away back to Borva?"

"But what would the poor people have done if he had never gone back?"

"Oh, some one else would have taken his place."

"And then, if he were living here, or in London, he might have got tired, and he might have wished to go back to the Lewis and see all the people he knew; and then he would come among them like a stranger, and have no house to go to."

Then Lavender said, quite gently:--

"Do you think, Sheila, you will ever tire of living in the South?"

The girl looked up quickly, and said with a sort of surprised questioning in her eyes:--

"No, not with you. But then we shall often go to the Lewis?"

"Oh, yes," her husband said, "as often as we can conveniently. But it will take some time at first, you know, before you get to know all my friends, who are to be your friends, and before you get properly fitted with your social circle. That will take you a long time, Sheila, and you may have many annoyances or embarrassments to encounter; but you won't be very much afraid, my girl?"

Sheila merely looked up to him; there was no fear in the frank, brave eyes.

The first large town she saw struck a cold chill to her heart. On a wet and dismal afternoon they sailed into Greenock. A heavy smoke hung about the black building-yards and the dirty quays; the narrow and squalid streets were filled with mud, and only the poorer sections of the population waded through the mire or hung disconsolately about the corners of the thorough-fares. A gloomier picture could not well be conceived; and Sheila, chilled with the long and wet sail and bewildered by the noise and bustle of the harbor, was driven to the hotel with a sore heart and a downcast face.

"This is not like London, Frank?" she said, pretty nearly ready to cry with disappointment.

"This? No. Well, it is like a part of London, certainly, but not the part you will live in."

"But how can we live in the one place without passing the other and being made miserable by it? There was no part of Oban like this."

"Why, you will live miles away from the docks and quays of London. You might live for a lifetime in London without ever knowing it had a harbor. Don't you be afraid, Sheila. You will live in a district where there are far finer houses than any you saw in Oban, and far finer trees; and within a few minutes' walk you will find great gardens and parks, with lakes in them and wild fowls, and you will be able to teach the boys about how to set the helm and the sails when they are launching their small boats."

"I should like that," said Sheila, her face brightening.

"Perhaps you would like a boat yourself?"

"Yes," she said, frankly. "If there were not many people there, we might go out sometimes in the evening--"

Her husband laughed and took her hand: "You don't understand, Sheila. The boats the boys have are little things a foot or two long--like the one in your papa's bedroom in Borva. But many of the boys would be greatly obliged to you if you would teach them how to manage the sails properly, for sometimes dreadful shipwrecks occur."

"You must bring them to our house. I am very fond of little boys, when they begin to forget to be shy, and let you become acquainted with them."

"Well," said Lavender, "I don't know many of the boys who sail boats in the Serpentine: you will have to make their acquaintance yourself. But I know one boy whom I must bring to the house. He is a German-Jew boy, who is going to be another Mendelssohn, his friends say. He is a pretty boy, with ruddy-brown hair, big black eyes, and a fine forehead; and he really sings and plays delightfully. But you know, Sheila, you must not treat him as a boy, for he is over fourteen, I should think; and if you were to kiss him--"

"He might be angry," said Sheila, with perfect simplicity.

"I might," said Lavender; and then, noticing that she seemed a little surprised, he merely patted her head and bade her go and get ready for dinner.

Then came the great climax of Sheila's southward journey--her arrival in London. She was all anxiety to see her future home; and as luck would have it, there was a fair spring morning shining over the city. For a couple of hours before, she had sat and looked out of the carriage-window as the train whirled rapidly through the scarcely awakened country, and she had seen the soft and beautiful landscapes of the South lit up by the early sunlight. How the bright little villages shone, with here and there a gilt weathercock glittering on the spire of some small gray church, while as yet in many valleys a pale gray mist lay along the bed of the level streams or clung to the dense woods on the upland heights! Which was the more beautiful--the sharp, clear picture, with its brilliant colors and its awakening life, or the more mystic landscape over which was still drawn the tender veil of the morning haze? She could not tell. She only knew that England, as she then saw it, seemed a great country that was very beautiful, that had few inhabitants, and that was still and sleepy and bathed in sunshine. How happy must the people be who lived in those quiet green valleys by the side of slow and smooth rivers, and amid great woods and avenues of stately trees, the like of which she had not imagined even in her dreams!

But from the moment that they got out at Euston Square she seemed a trifle bewildered, and could only do implicitly as her husband bade her--clinging to his hand, for the most part, as if to make sure of guidance. She did indeed glance somewhat nervously at the hansom into which Lavender put her, apparently asking how such a tall and narrow two-wheeled vehicle could be prevented toppling over. But when he, having sent on all their luggage by a respectable old four-wheeler, got into the hansom beside her, and put his hand inside her arm, and bade her be of good cheer that she should have such a pleasant morning to welcome her to London, she said "Yes," mechanically, and only looked out in a wistful fashion at the great houses and trees of Euston Square, the mighty and roaring stream of omnibuses, the droves of strangers, mostly clad in black, as if they were going to church, and the pale blue smoke that seemed to mix with the sunshine and make it cold and distant.

They were in no hurry, these two, on that still morning; and so, to impress Sheila all at once with a sense of the greatness and grandeur of London, he made the cabman cut down by Park Crescent and Portland Place to Regent Circus. Then they went along Oxford Street; and there were crowded omnibuses taking young men into the city, while all the pavements were busy with hurrying passers-by. What multitudes of unknown faces, unknown to her and unknown to each other! These people did not speak: they only hurried on, each intent upon his own affairs, caring nothing, apparently, for the din around them, and looking so strange and

sad in their black clothes in the pale and misty sunlight.

"You are in a trance, Sheila," he said.

She did not answer. Surely she had wandered into some magical city, for now the houses on one side of the way suddenly ceased, and she saw before her a great and undulating extent of green, with a border of beautiful flowers, and with groups of trees that met the sky all along the southern horizon. Did the green and beautiful country she had seen, shoot in thus into the heart of the town, or was there another city far away on the other side of the trees? The place was almost as deserted as those still valleys she had passed by in the morning. Here in the street there was the roar of a passing crowd; but there was a long and almost deserted stretch of park, with winding roads and umbrageous trees, on which the wan sunlight fell from between loose masses of half-golden cloud.

Then they passed Kensington Gardens, and there were more people walking down the broad highways between the elms.

"You are getting nearly home now, Sheila," he said. "And you will be able to come and walk in these avenues whenever you please."

Was this, then, her home? this section of a barrack-row of dwellings, all alike in steps, pillars, doors, and windows? When she got inside, the servant who had opened the door bobbed a courtesy to her: should she shake hands with her and say. "And are you ferry well?" But at this moment Lavender came running up the steps, playfully hurried her into the house and up the stairs, and led her into her own drawing-room. "Well, darling, what do you think of your home, now that you see it?"

Sheila looked around timidly. It was not a big room, but it was a palace in height and grandeur and color compared with that little museum in Borva in which Sheila's piano stood. It was all so strange and beautiful--the split pomegranates and quaint leaves on the upper part of the walls, and underneath a dull slate-color where the pictures hung; the curious painting on the frames of the mirrors; the brilliant curtains, with their stiff and formal patterns. It was not very much like a home as yet; it was more like a picture that had been carefully planned and executed; but she knew how he had thought of pleasing her in choosing these things, and without saying a word she took his hand and kissed it. And then she went to one of the three tall French windows and looked out on the square. There, between the trees, was a space of beautiful soft green; and some children dressed in bright dresses, and attended by a governess in sober black, had just begun to play croquet. An elderly lady with a small white dog was walking along one of the

graveled paths. An old man was pruning some bushes.

"It is very still and quiet here," said Sheila. "I was afraid we should have to live in that terrible noise always."

"I hope you won't find it dull, my darling," he said.

"Dull, when you are here?"

"But I cannot always be here, you know."

She looked up.

"You see, a man is so much in the way if he is dawdling about a house all day long. You would begin to regard me as a nuisance, Sheila, and would be for sending me to play croquet with those young Carruthers, merely that you might get the rooms dusted. Besides, you know I couldn't work here: I must have a studio of some sort--in the neighborhood, of course. And then you will give me your orders in the morning as to when I am to come round for luncheon or dinner."

"And you will be alone all day at your work?"

"Yes."

"Then I will come and sit with you, my poor boy," she said.

"Much work I should do in that case!" he said. "But we'll see. In the mean time go up-stairs and get your things off: that young person below has breakfast ready, I dare say."

"But you have not shown me yet where Mr. Ingram lives," said Sheila before she went to the door.

"Oh, that is miles away. You have only seen a little bit of London yet. Ingram lives about as far away from here as the distance you have just come, but in another direction."

"It is like a world made of houses," said Sheila, "and all filled with strangers. But you will take me to see Mr. Ingram?"

"By-and-by, yes. But he is sure to drop in on you as soon as he fancies you are settled in your new home."

And here at last was Mr. Ingram come; and the mere sound of his voice seemed to carry her back to Borva, so that in talking to him and waiting

on him as of old, she would scarcely have been surprised if her father had walked in to say that a coaster was making for the harbor, or that Duncan was going over to Stornoway, and Sheila would have to give him commissions.

Her husband did not take the same interest in the social and political affairs of Borva that Mr. Ingram did. Lavender had made a pretense of assisting Sheila in her work among the poor people, but the effort was a hopeless failure. He could not remember the name of the family that wanted a new boat, and was visibly impatient when Sheila would sit down to write out for some aged crone a letter to her grandson in Canada. Now Ingram, for the mere sake of occupation, had qualified himself during his various visits to Lewis, so that he might have become the home minister of the King of Borva; and Sheila was glad to have one attentive listener as she described all the wonderful things that had happened in the island since the previous summer.

But Ingram had got a full and complete holiday on which to come up and see Sheila; and he had brought with him the wild and startling proposal that in order that she should take her first plunge into the pleasures of civilized life, her husband and herself should drive down to Richmond and dine at the Star and Garter.

"What is that?" said Sheila.

"My dear girl," said her husband, seriously, "your ignorance is something fearful to contemplate. It is quite bewildering. How can a person who does not know what the Star and Garter is, be told what the Star and Garter is?"

"But I am willing to go and see," said Sheila.

"Then I must look after getting a brougham," said Lavender, rising.

"A brougham on such a day as this?" exclaimed Ingram. "Nonsense! Get an open trap of some sort; and Sheila, just to please me, will put on that very blue dress she used to wear in Borva, and the hat and the white feather, if she has got them."

"Perhaps you would like me to put on a sealskin cap and a red handkerchief instead of a collar," observed Lavender, calmly.

"You may do as you please. Sheila and I are going to dine at the Star and Garter."

"May I put on that blue dress?" said the girl, going up to her husband.

"Yes, of course, if you like," said Lavender meekly, going off to order the carriage, and wondering by what route he could drive those two maniacs down to Richmond so that none of his friends should see them.

When he came back again, bringing with him a landau which could be shut up for the homeward journey at night, he had to confess that no costume seemed to suit Sheila so well as the rough sailor dress; and he was so pleased with her appearance that he consented at once to let Bras go with them in the carriage, on condition that Sheila should be responsible for him. Indeed, after the first shiver of driving away from the square was over, he forgot that there was much unusual about the look of this odd pleasure party. If you had told him eighteen months before that on a bright day in May, just as people were going home from the Park for luncheon, he would go for a drive in a hired trap with one horse, his companions being a man with a brown wide-awake, a girl dressed as though she were the owner of a yacht, and an immense deerhound, and that in this fashion he would dare to drive up to the Star and Garter and order dinner, he would have bet five hundred to one that such a thing would never occur so long as he preserved his senses. But somehow he did not mind much. He was very much at home with those two people beside him; the day was bright and fresh; the horse went a good pace; and once they were over Hammersmith Bridge and out among fields and trees, the country looked exceedingly pretty, and all the beauty of it was mirrored in Sheila's eyes.

"I can't quite make you out in that dress, Sheila," he said. "I am not sure whether it is real and business-like or a theatrical costume. I have seen girls on Ryde Pier with something of the same sort on, only a good deal more pronounced, you know, and they looked like sham yachtsmen; and I have seen stewardesses wearing that color and texture of cloth--"

"But why not leave it as it is," said Ingram--"a solitary costume produced by certain conditions of climate and duties, acting in conjunction with a natural taste for harmonious coloring and simple form? That dress, I will maintain, sprang as naturally from the salt sea as Aphrodite did; and the man who suspects artifice in it, or invention, has had his mind perverted by the skepticism of modern society."

"Is my dress so very wonderful?" said Sheila, with a grave complacence. "I am pleased that the Lewis has produced such a fine thing, and perhaps you would like me to tell you its history. It was my papa bought a piece of blue serge in Stornoway: it cost three shillings sixpence a yard, and a dressmaker in Stornoway cut it for me, and I made it myself. That is all the history of the wonderful dress."

Suddenly Sheila seized her husband's arm. They had got down to the river by Mortlake; and there, on the broad bosom of the stream, a long and slender boat was shooting by, pulled by four oarsmen clad in white flannel.

"How can they go out in such a boat?" said Sheila, with great alarm visible in her eyes. "It is scarcely a boat at all; and if they touch a rock, or if the wind catches them--"

"Don't be frightened, Sheila," said her husband. "They are quite safe. There are no rocks in our rivers, and the wind does not give us squalls here like those on Loch Roag. You will see hundreds of those boats by and by, and perhaps you yourself will go out in one."

"Oh, never, never!" she said, almost with a shudder.

"Why, if the people here heard you they would not know how brave a sailor you are. You are not afraid to go out at night by yourself on the sea, and you won't go on a smooth inland river--"

"But those boats: if you touch them they must go over."

She seemed glad to get away from the river. She could not be persuaded of the safety of the slender craft of the Thames; and indeed, for some time after seemed so strangely depressed that Lavender begged and prayed of her to tell him what was the matter. It was simple enough. She had heard him speak of his boating adventures. Was it in such boats as that she had just seen? and might he not be some day going out in one of them and an accident--the breaking of an oar, a gust of wind--

There was nothing for it but to reassure her by a solemn promise that in no circumstances whatever would he, Lavender, go into a boat without her express permission, whereupon Sheila was as grateful to him as though he had dowered her with a kingdom.

This was not the Richmond Hill of her fancy--this spacious height; with its great mansions, its magnificent elms, and its view of all the westward and wooded country, with the blue-white streak of the river winding through the green foliage. Where was the farm? The famous Lass of Richmond Hill must have lived on a farm; but here surely were the houses of great lords and nobles, which had apparently been there for years and years. And was this really a hotel that they stopped at--this great building that she could only compare to Stornoway Castle?

"Now, Sheila," said Lavender, after they had ordered dinner and gone

out, "mind you keep a tight hold on that leash, for Bras will see strange things in the Park."

"It is I who will see strange things," she said; and the prophecy was amply fulfilled. For as they went along the broad path, and came better into view of the splendid undulation of woodland and pasture and fern, when on the one hand they saw the Thames far below them flowing through the green and spacious valley, and on the other hand caught some dusky glimpse of the far white houses of London, it seemed to her that she had got into a new world, and that this world was far more beautiful than the great city she had left. She did not care so much for the famous view from the hill. She had cast one quick look to the horizon, with one throb of expectation that the sea might be there. There was no sea there--only the faint blue of long lines of country, apparently without limit. Moreover, over the western landscape a faint haze prevailed, that increased in the distance and softened down the more distant woods into a sober gray. That great extent of wooded plain, lying sleepily in its pale mists, was not so cheerful as the scene around her, where the sunlight was sharp and clear, the air fresh, the trees flooded with a pure and bright color. Here indeed was a cheerful and beautiful world, and she was full of curiosity to know all about it and its strange features. What was the name of this tree? and how did it differ from that? Were not these rabbits over by the fence? and did rabbits live in the midst of trees and bushes? What sort of wood was the fence made of? and was it not terribly expensive to have such a protection? Could not he tell the cost of a wooden fence? Why did they not use wire netting? Was not that a loch away down there? and what was its name? A loch without a name! Did the salmon come up to it? and did any sea-birds ever come inland and build their nests on its margin?

"O, Bras, you must come and look at the loch. It is a long time since you will see a loch."

And away she went through the thick bracken, holding on to the swaying leash that held the galloping greyhound, and running swiftly as though she had been making down for the shore to get out the Maighdean-mhara.

"Sheila," called her husband, "don't be foolish!"

"Sheila," called Ingram, "have pity on an old man!"

Suddenly she stopped. A brace of partridges had sprung up at some distance, and with a wild whirr of their wings were now directing their low and rapid flight toward the bottom of the valley.

"What birds are those?" she said peremptorily.

She took no notice of the fact that her companions were pretty nearly too blown to speak. There was a brisk life and color in her face, and all her attention was absorbed in watching the flight of the birds. Lavender fancied he saw in the fixed and keen look something of old Mackenzie's gray eye: it was not the first trace of a likeness to her father he had seen.

"You bad girl!" he said, "they are partridges."

She paid no heed to this reproach, for what were those other things over there underneath the trees? Bras had pricked up his ears, and there was a strange excitement in his look and in his trembling frame.

"Deer!" she cried, with her eyes as fixed as were those of the dog beside her.

"Well," said her husband calmly, "what although they are deer?"

"But Bras--" she said; and with that she caught the leash with both her hands,

"Bras won't mind them if you keep him quiet. I suppose you can manage him better than I can. I wish we had brought a whip."

"I would rather let him kill every deer in the Park than touch him with a whip," said Sheila proudly.

"You fearful creature, you don't know what you say. That is high treason. If George Ranger heard you, he would have you hanged in front of the Star and Garter."

"Who is George Ranger?" said Sheila with an air as if she had said, "Do you know that I am the daughter of the King of Borva, and whoever touches me will have to answer to my papa, who is not afraid of any George Ranger?"

"He is a great lord who hangs all persons who disturb the deer in this Park."

"But why do they not go away?" said Sheila impatiently. "I have never seen any deer so stupid. It is their own fault if they are disturbed: why do they remain so near to people and to houses?"

"My dear child, if Bras wasn't here you would probably find some of those deer coming up to see if you had any bits of sugar or pieces of

bread about your pockets."

"Then they are like sheep--they are not like deer," she said with some contempt. "If I could only tell Bras that it is sheep he will be looking at, he would not look any more. And so small they are! They are as small as the roe, but they have horns as big as many of the red-deer. Do people eat them?"

"I suppose so."

"And what will they cost?"

"I am sure I can't tell you."

"Are they as good as the roe or the big deer?"

"I don't know that either. I don't think I ever ate fallow-deer. But you know they are not kept here for that purpose. A great many gentlemen in this country keep a lot of them in their parks merely to look pretty. They cost a great deal more than they produce."

"They must eat up a great deal of fine grass," said Sheila almost sorrowfully. "It is a beautiful ground for sheep--no rushes, no peat moss, only fine good grass and dry land. I should like my papa to see all this beautiful ground."

"I fancy he has seen it."

"Was my papa here?"

"I think he said so."

"And did he see those deer?"

"Doubtless."

"He never told me of them."

By this time they had pretty nearly got down to the little lake, and Bras had been alternately coaxed and threatened into a quiescent mood.

Sheila evidently expected to hear a flapping of sea-fowls' wings when they got near the margin; and looked all round for the first sudden dart from the banks. But a dead silence prevailed; and as there were neither fish nor birds to watch, she went along to a wooden bench and sat down there, one of her companions on each hand. It was a pretty scene that

lay before her--the small stretch of water ruffled with the wind, but showing a dash of blue sky here and there--the trees in the inclosure beyond, clad in their summer foliage, the smooth greensward shining in the afternoon sunlight. Here at least was absolute quiet after the roar of London; and it was somewhat wistfully that she asked her husband how far this place was from her home, and whether, when he was at work, she could not come down here by herself.

"Certainly," he said, never dreaming that she would think of doing such a thing.

By-and-by they returned to the hotel; and while they sat at dinner a great fire of sunset spread over the west; and the far woods became of a rich purple, streaked here and there with lines of pale white mist. The river caught the glow of the crimson clouds above, and shone duskily red amid the dark green of the trees. Deeper and deeper grew the color of the sun as it sank to the horizon, until it disappeared behind one low bar of purple cloud; and then the wild glow in the west slowly faded away; the river became pallid and indistinct; the white mists over the distant woods seemed to grow denser; and then, as here and there a lamp was lit far down in the valley, one or two pale stars appeared in the sky overhead, and the night came on apace.

"It is so strange," Sheila said, "to find the darkness coming on, and not to hear the sound of the waves. I wonder if it is a fine night at Borva."

Her husband went over to her and led her back to the table, where the candles, shining over the white cloth and the colored glasses, offered a more cheerful picture than the darkening landscape outside. They were in a private room; so that when dinner was over, Sheila was allowed to amuse herself with the fruit, while her two companions lit their cigars. Where was the quaint old piano now; and the glass of hot whisky and water; and the 'Lament of Monaltrie,' or 'Love in thine eyes forever plays'? It seemed, but for the greatness of the room, to be a repetition of one of those evenings at Borva that now belonged to a far-off past. Here was Sheila, not minding the smoke, listening to Ingram as of old, and sometimes saying something in that sweetly inflected speech of hers; here was Ingram, talking, as it were, out of a brown study, and morosely objecting to pretty nearly everything Lavender said, but always ready to prove Sheila right; and Lavender himself, as unlike a married man as ever, talking impatiently, impetuously, and wildly, except at such times as he said something to his young wife, and then some brief smile and look, or some pat on the hand, said more than words. But where, Sheila may have thought, was the one wanting to complete the group? Has he gone down to Borvabost to see about the cargoes of fish to be sent off in the

morning? Perhaps he is talking to Duncan outside about the cleaning of the guns, or making up cartridges in the kitchen. When Sheila's attention wandered away from the talk of her companions, she could not help listening for the sound of the waves; and as there was no such message coming to her from the great wooded plain without, her fancy took her away across that mighty country she had traveled through, and carried her up to the island of Loch Roag, until she almost fancied she could smell the peat-smoke in the night air, and listen to the sea, and hear her father pacing up and down the gravel outside the house, perhaps thinking of her as she was thinking of him.

This little excursion to Richmond was long remembered by those three. It was the last of their meetings before Sheila was ushered into the big world to busy herself with new occupations and cares. It was a pleasant little journey throughout; for as they got into the landau to drive back to town, the moon was shining high up in the southern heavens, and the air was mild and fresh, so that they had the carriage opened, and Sheila, well wrapped up, lay and looked around her with a strange wonder and joy as they drove underneath the shadow of the trees and out again into the clear sheen of the night. They saw the river, too, flowing smoothly and palely down between its dark banks; and somehow here the silence checked them, and they hummed no more those duets they used to sing up at Borva. Of what were they thinking, then, as they drove through the clear night along the lonely road? Lavender at least was rejoicing at his great good fortune that he had secured for ever to himself the true-hearted girl who now sat opposite to him, with the moonlight touching her face and hair; and he was laughing to himself at the notion that he did not properly appreciate her or understand her or perceive her real character. If not he, who then? Had he not watched every turn of her disposition, every expression of her wishes, every grace of her manner and look of her eyes? and was he not overjoyed to find that the more he knew of her the more he loved her? Marriage had increased rather than diminished the mystery and wonder he had woven about her. He was more her lover now than he had been before his marriage. Who could see in her eyes what he saw? Elderly folks can look at a girl's eyes, and see that they are brown or blue or green, as the case may be; but the lover looks at them and sees in them the magic mirror of a hundred possible worlds. How can he fathom the sea of dreams that lies there, or tell what strange fancies and reminiscences may be involved in an absent look? Is she thinking of starlit nights on some distant lake, or of the old bygone days on the hills? All her former life is told there, and yet but half told, and he longs to become possessed of all the beautiful past that she has seen. Here is a constant mystery to him, and there is a singular and wistful attraction for him in those still deeps where the thoughts and dreams of an innocent soul lie but half revealed. He does not see those things in the

eyes of women he is not in love with; but when in after years he is carelessly regarding this or the other woman, some chance look, some brief and sudden turn of expression, will recall to him, as with a stroke of lightning, all the old wonder-time, and his heart will go nigh to breaking to think that he has grown old, and that he has forgotten so much, and that the fair, wild days of romance and longing are passed away forever.



NISHIKIGI

The Project Gutenberg EBook of **Certain Noble Plays of Japan**, by Ezra Pound

A PLAY IN TWO ACTS BY MOTOKIYO.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

THE WAKI A priest

THE SHITE, OR HERO Ghost of the lover

TSURE Ghost of the woman; they have both been long dead, and have not yet been united.

CHORUS

The 'Nishikigi' are wands used as a love charm.

'Hosonuno' is the name of a local cloth which the woman weaves.

NISHIKIGI

First Part

WAKI
There never was anybody heard of Mount Shinobu but had a kindly feeling for it; so I, like any other priest that might want to know a little bit about each one of the provinces, may as well be walking up here along the much travelled road.

I have not yet been about the east country, but now I have set my mind to go as far as the earth goes; and why shouldn't I, after all? seeing that I go about with my heart set upon no particular place whatsoever, and with no other man's flag in my hand, no more than a cloud has. It is a flag of the night I see coming down upon me. I wonder now, would the sea be that way, or the little place Kefu that they say is stuck down against it?

SHITE (to Tsure)
Times out of mind am I here setting up this bright branch, this silky wood with the charms painted in it as fine as the web you'd get in the grass-cloth of Shinobu, that they'd be still selling you in this mountain.

SHITE AND TSURE
Tangled, we are entangled. Whose fault was it, dear? tangled up as the grass patterns are tangled up in this coarse cloth, or as the little Mushi that lives on and chirrups in dried sea-weed. We do not know where are to-day our tears in the undergrowth of this eternal wilderness. We neither wake nor sleep, and passing our nights in a sorrow which is in the end a vision, what are these scenes of spring to us? This thinking in sleep of someone who has no thought of you, is it more than a dream? and yet surely it is the natural way of love. In our hearts there is much and in our bodies nothing, and we do nothing at all, and only the waters of the river of tears flow quickly.

CHORUS
Narrow is the cloth of Kefu, but wild is that river, that torrent of the hills, between the beloved and the bride.

The cloth she had woven is faded, the thousand one hundred nights were night-trysts watched out in vain.

WAKI (not recognizing the nature of the speakers)

Strange indeed, seeing these town-people here.
They seem like man and wife,
And the lady seems to be holding something
Like a cloth woven of feathers,
While he has a staff or a wooden sceptre
Beautifully ornate.
Both of these things are strange;
In any case, I wonder what they call them.

TSURE

This is a narrow cloth called 'Hosonuno,'
It is just the breadth of the loom.

SHITE

And this is merely wood painted,
And yet the place is famous because of these things.
Would you care to buy them from us?

WAKI
Yes, I know that the cloth of this place and the lacquers are famous things. I have already heard of their glory, and yet I still wonder why they have such great reputation.

TSURE
Ah well now, that's a disappointment. Here they call the wood Nishikigi,' and the woven stuff 'Hosonuno,' and yet you come saying that you have never heard why, and never heard the story. Is it reasonable?

SHITE
No, no, that is reasonable enough. What can people be expected to know of these affairs when it is more than they can do to keep abreast of their

own?

BOTH (to the Priest)
Ah well, you look like a person who has abandoned the world; it is reasonable enough that you should not know the worth of wands and cloths with love's signs painted upon them, with love's marks painted and dyed.

WAKI
That is a fine answer. And you would tell me then that Nishikigi and Hosonuno are names bound over with love?

SHITE
They are names in love's list surely. Every day for a year, for three years come to their full, the wands Nishikigi were set up, until there were a thousand in all. And they are in song in your time, and will be. 'Chidzuka' they call them.

TSURE

These names are surely a by-word.
As the cloth Hosonuno is narrow of weft,
More narrow than the breast,
We call by this name any woman
Whose breasts are hard to come nigh to.
It is a name in books of love.

SHITE
'Tis a sad name to look back on.

TSURE

A thousand wands were in vain.
A sad name, set in a story.

SHITE

A seed-pod void of the seed,
We had no meeting together.

TSURE
Let him read out the story.

CHORUS

I
At last they forget, they forget.
The wands are no longer offered,
The custom is faded away.
The narrow cloth of Kefu
Will not meet over the breast.
'Tis the story of Hosonuno,
This is the tale:
These bodies, having no weft,
Even now are not come together.
Truly a shameful story,
A tale to bring shame on the gods.

II
Names of love,
Now for a little spell,
For a faint charm only,
For a charm as slight as the binding together
Of pine-flakes in Iwashiro,
And for saying a wish over them about sunset,
We return, and return to our lodging.
The evening sun leaves a shadow.

WAKI
Go on, tell out all the story.

SHITE
There is an old custom of this country. We make wands of meditation, and deck them with symbols, and set them before a gate, when we are suitors.

TSURE
And we women take up a wand of the man we would meet with, and let the others lie, although a man might come for a hundred nights, it may be, or for a thousand nights in three years, till there were a thousand wands

here in the shade of this mountain. We know the funeral cave of such a man, one who had watched out the thousand nights; a bright cave, for they buried him with all his wands. They have named it the 'Cave of the many charms.'

WAKI

I will go to that love-cave,
It will be a tale to take back to my village.
Will you show me my way there?

SHITE
So be it, I will teach you the path.

TSURE
Tell him to come over this way.

BOTH

Here are the pair of them
Going along before the traveller.

CHORUS

We have spent the whole day until dusk
Pushing aside the grass
From the over-grown way at Kefu,
And we are not yet come to the cave.
O you there, cutting grass on the hill,
Please set your mind on this matter.
'You'd be asking where the dew is
'While the frost's lying here on the road.
'Who'd tell you that now?'
Very well then don't tell us,
But be sure we will come to the cave.

SHITE

There's a cold feel in the autumn.

Night comes....

CHORUS

And storms; trees giving up their leaf,
Spotted with sudden showers.
Autumn! our feet are clogged
In the dew-drenched, entangled leaves.
The perpetual shadow is lonely,
The mountain shadow is lying alone.
The owl cries out from the ivies
That drag their weight on the pine.
Among the orchids and chrysanthemum flowers
The hiding fox is now lord of that love-cave,
Nishidzuka,
That is dyed like the maple's leaf.
They have left us this thing for a saying.
That pair have gone into the cave.
(sign for the exit of Shite and Tsure)

Second Part

(The Waki has taken the posture of sleep. His respectful visit to the cave is beginning to have its effect.)

WAKI (restless)

It seems that I cannot sleep
For the length of a pricket's horn.
Under October wind, under pines, under night!
I will do service to Butsu.
(he performs the gestures of a ritual)

TSURE

Aie! honoured priest!
You do not dip twice in the river
Beneath the same tree's shadow

Without bonds in some other life.
Hear sooth-say,
Now is there meeting between us,
Between us who were until now
In life and in after-life kept apart.
A dream-bridge over wild grass,
Over the grass I dwell in.
O honoured! do not awake me by force.
I see that the law is perfect.

SHITE (supposedly invisible)

It is a good service you have done, sir,
A service that spreads in two worlds,
And binds up an ancient love
That was stretched out between them.
I had watched for a thousand days.
Take my thanks,
For this meeting is under a difficult law.
And now I will show myself in the form of Nishikigi.
I will come out now for the first time in colour.

(The characters announce or explain their acts, as these are mostly symbolical. Thus here the Shite, or Sh'te, announces his change of costume, and later the dance.)

CHORUS

The three years are over and past:
All that is but an old story.

SHITE

To dream under dream we return.
Three years.... And the meeting comes now!
This night has happened over and over,
And only now comes the tryst.

CHORUS

Look there to the cave
Beneath the stems of the Suzuki.
From under the shadows of the love-grass,
See, see how they come forth and appear
For an instant.... Illusion!

SHITE

There is at the root of hell
No distinction between princes and commons;
Wretched for me! 'tis the saying.

WAKI

Strange, what seemed so very old a cave
Is all glittering-bright within,
Like the flicker of fire.
It is like the inside of a house.
They are setting up a loom,
And heaping up charm-sticks. No,
The hangings are out of old time.
Is it illusion, illusion?

TSURE

Our hearts have been in the dark of the falling snow,
We have been astray in the flurry.
You should tell better than we
How much is illusion;
You who are in the world.
We have been in the whirl of those who are fading.

SHITE

Indeed in old times Narihira said,
--and he has vanished with the years--
'Let a man who is in the world tell the fact.'
It is for you, traveller,

To say how much is illusion.

WAKI

Let it be a dream, or a vision,
Or what you will, I care not.
Only show me the old times over-past and snowed under--
Now, soon, while the night lasts.

SHITE

Look then, the old times are shown,
Faint as the shadow-flower shows in the grass that bears it;
And you've but a moon for lanthorn.

TSURE

The woman has gone into the cave.
She sets up her loom there
For the weaving of Hosonuno,
Thin as the heart of Autumn.

SHITE

The suitor for his part, holding his charm-sticks,
Knocks on a gate which was barred.

TSURE

In old time he got back no answer,
No secret sound at all
Save....

SHITE
The sound of the loom.

TSURE

It was a sweet sound like katydids and crickets,

A thin sound like the Autumn.

SHITE
It was what you would hear any night.

TSURE

Kiri.

SHITE

Hatari.

TSURE

Cho.

SHITE

Cho.

CHORUS (mimicking the sound of crickets)

Kiri, hatari, cho, cho,
Kiri, hatari, cho, cho.
The cricket sews on at his old rags,
With all the new grass in the field; sho,
Churr, isho, like the whir of a loom: churr.

CHORUS (antistrophe)

Let be, they make grass-cloth in Kefu,
Kefu, the land's end, matchless in the world.

SHITE

That is an old custom, truly,
But this priest would look on the past.

CHORUS

The good priest himself would say:
Even if we weave the cloth, Hosonuno,
And set up the charm-sticks
For a thousand, a hundred nights,
Even then our beautiful desire will not pass,
Nor fade nor die out.

SHITE

Even to-day the difficulty of our meeting is remembered,
And is remembered in song.

CHORUS

That we may acquire power,
Even in our faint substance,
We will show forth even now,
And though it be but in a dream,
Our form of repentance.
(explaining the movement of the Shite and Tsure)
There he is carrying wands,
And she has no need to be asked.
See her within the cave,
With a cricket-like noise of weaving.
The grass-gates and the hedge are between them;
That is a symbol.
Night has already come on.
(now explaining the thoughts of the man's spirit)
Love's thoughts are heaped high within him,
As high as the charm-sticks,
As high as the charm-sticks, once coloured,
Now fading, lie heaped in this cave.
And he knows of their fading. He says:
I lie a body, unknown to any other man,
Like old wood buried in moss.
It were a fit thing
That I should stop thinking the love-thoughts.

The charm-sticks fade and decay,
And yet,
The rumour of our love
Takes foot and moves through the world.
We had no meeting
But tears have, it seems, brought out a bright blossom
Upon the dyed tree of love.

SHITE

Tell me, could I have foreseen
Or known what a heap of my writings
Should lie at the end of her shaft-bench?

CHORUS

A hundred nights and more
Of twisting, encumbered sleep,
And now they make it a ballad,
Not for one year or for two only
But until the days lie deep
As the sand's depth at Kefu,
Until the year's end is red with Autumn,
Red like these love-wands,
A thousand nights are in vain.
And I stand at this gate-side.
You grant no admission, you do not show yourself
Until I and my sleeves are faded.
By the dew-like gemming of tears upon my sleeve,
Why will you grant no admission?
And we all are doomed to pass,
You, and my sleeves and my tears.
And you did not even know when three years had come to an end.
Cruel, ah cruel!
The charm-sticks....

SHITE

Were set up a thousand times;

Then, now, and for always.

CHORUS
Shall I ever at last see into that room of hers, which no other sight has traversed?

SHITE

Happy at last and well-starred,
Now comes the eve of betrothal:
We meet for the wine-cup.

CHORUS

How glorious the sleeves of the dance,
That are like snow-whirls!

SHITE
Tread out the dance.

CHORUS

Tread out the dance and bring music.
This dance is for Nishikigi.

SHITE
This dance is for the evening plays,
And for the weaving.

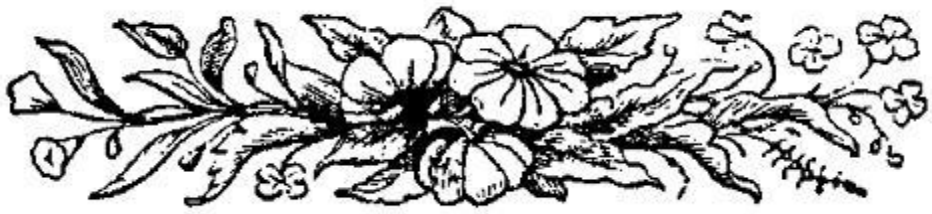
CHORUS

For the tokens between lover and lover:
It is a reflecting in the wine-cup.

CHORUS

Ari-aki,
The dawn!
Come, we are out of place;

Let us go ere the light comes.
(to the Waki)
We ask you, do not awake,
We all will wither away,
The wands and this cloth of a dream.
Now you will come out of sleep,
You tread the border and nothing
Awaits you: no, all this will wither away.
There is nothing here but this cave in the field's midst.
To-day's wind moves in the pines;
A wild place, unlit, and unfilled.



THE INTIMATE PHOTOPLAY

The Project Gutenberg eBook, **The Art Of The Moving Picture**, by Vachel Lindsay

Let us take for our platform this sentence: THE MOTION PICTURE ART IS A GREAT HIGH ART, NOT A PROCESS OF COMMERCIAL MANUFACTURE. The people I hope to convince of this are (1) The great art museums of America, including the people who support them in any way, the people who give the current exhibitions there or attend them, the art school students in the corridors below coming on in the same field; (2) the departments of English, of the history of the drama, of the practice of the drama, and the history and practice of "art" in that amazingly long list of our colleges and universities--to be found, for instance, in the World Almanac; (3) the critical and literary world generally. Somewhere in this enormous field, piled with endowments mountain high, it should be possible to establish the theory and practice of the photoplay as a fine art. Readers who do not care for the history of any art, readers who have neither curiosity nor aspiration in regard to any of the ten or eleven muses who now dance around Apollo, such shabby readers had best lay the book down now. Shabby readers do not like great issues. My poor

little sermon is concerned with a great issue, the clearing of the way for a critical standard, whereby the ultimate photoplay may be judged. I cannot teach office-boys ways to make "quick money" in the "movies." That seems to be the delicately implied purpose of the mass of books on the photoplay subject. They are, indeed, a sickening array. Freeburg's book is one of the noble exceptions. And I have paid tribute elsewhere to John Emerson and Anita Loos. They have written a crusading book, and many crusading articles.

After five years of exceedingly lonely art study, in which I had always specialized in museum exhibits, prowling around like a lost dog, I began to intensify my museum study, and at the same time shout about what I was discovering. From nineteen hundred and five on I did orate my opinions to a group of advanced students. We assembled weekly for several winters in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, for the discussion of the masterpieces in historic order, from Egypt to America. From that standpoint, the work least often found, hardest to make, least popular in the street, may be in the end the one most treasured in a world-museum as a counsellor and stimulus of mankind. Throughout this book I try to bring to bear the same simple standards of form, composition, mood, and motive that we used in finding the fundamental exhibits; the standards which are taken for granted in art histories and schools, radical or conservative, anywhere.

Again we assume it is eight o'clock in the evening, friend reader, when the chapter begins.

Just as the Action Picture has its photographic basis or fundamental metaphor in the long chase down the highway, so the Intimate Film has its photographic basis in the fact that any photoplay interior has a very small ground plan, and the cosiest of enclosing walls. Many a worth-while scene is acted out in a space no bigger than that which is occupied by an office boy's stool and hat. If there is a table in this room, it is often so near it is half out of the picture or perhaps it is against the front line of the triangular ground-plan. Only the top of the table is seen, and nothing close up to us is pictured below that. We in the audience are privileged characters. Generally attending the show in bunches of two or three, we are members of the household on the screen. Sometimes we are sitting on the near side of the family board. Or we are gossiping whispering neighbors, of the shoemaker, we will say, with our noses pressed against the pane of a metaphoric window.

Take for contrast the old-fashioned stage production showing the room and work table of a shoemaker. As it were the whole side of the house has been removed. The shop is as big as a banquet hall. There is something essentially false in what we see, no matter how the stage manager fills in with old boxes, broken chairs, and the like. But the photoplay interior is the size such a work-room should be. And there the awl and pegs and bits of leather, speaking the silent language of picture writing, can be clearly shown. They are sometimes like the engine in

chapter two, the principal actors.

Though the Intimate-and-friendly Photoplay may be carried out of doors to the row of loafers in front of the country store, or the gossiping streets of the village, it takes its origin and theory from the snugness of the interior.

The restless reader replies that he has seen photoplays that showed ballrooms that were grandiose, not the least cosy. These are to be classed as out-of-door scenery so far as theory goes, and are to be discussed under the head of Splendor Pictures. Masses of human beings pour by like waves, the personalities of none made plain. The only definite people are the hero and heroine in the foreground, and maybe one other. Though these three be in ball-costume, the little triangle they occupy next to the camera is in sort an interior, while the impersonal guests behind them conform to the pageant principles of out-of-doors, and the dancers are to the main actor as is the wind-shaken forest to the charcoal-burner, or the bending grain to the reaper.

The Intimate Motion Picture is the world's new medium for studying, not the great passions, such as black hate, transcendent love, devouring ambition, but rather the half relaxed or gently restrained moods of human creatures. It gives also our idiosyncrasies. It is gossip _in extremis_. It is apt to chronicle our petty little skirmishes, rather than our feuds. In it Colin Clout and his comrades return.

The Intimate Photoplay should not crowd its characters. It should not choke itself trying to dramatize the whole big bloody plot of Lorna Doone, or any other novel with a dozen leading people. Yet some gentle episode from the John Ridd farm, some half-chapter when Lorna and the Doones are almost forgotten, would be fitting. Let the duck-yard be parading its best, and Annie among the milk-pails, her work for the evening well nigh done. The Vicar of Wakefield has his place in this form. The Intimate-and-friendly Motion Picture might very well give humorous moments in the lives of the great, King Alfred burning the cakes, and other legendary incidents of him. Plato's writings give us glimpses of Socrates, in between the long dialogues. And there are intimate scraps in Plutarch.

Prospective author-producer, do you remember Landor's Imaginary Conversations, and Lang's Letters to Dead Authors? Can you not attain to that informal understanding in pictorial delineations of such people?

The photoplay has been unjust to itself in comedies. The late John Bunny's important place in my memory comes from the first picture in which I saw him. It is a story of high life below stairs. The hero is the butler at a governor's reception. John Bunny's work as this man is a delightful piece of acting. The servants are growing tipsier downstairs, but the more afraid of the chief functionary every time he appears, frozen into sobriety by his glance. At the last moment this god of the

basement catches them at their worst and gives them a condescending but forgiving smile. The lid comes off completely. He himself has been imbibing. His surviving dignity in waiting on the governor's guests is worthy of the stage of Goldsmith and Sheridan. This film should be reissued in time as a Bunny memorial.

So far as my experience has gone, the best of the comedians is Sidney Drew. He could shine in the atmosphere of Pride and Prejudice or Cranford. But the best things I have seen of his are far from such. I beg the pardon of Miss Jane Austen and Mrs. Gaskell while I mention Who's Who in Hogg's Hollow, and A Regiment of Two. Over these I rejoiced like a yokel with a pocketful of butterscotch and peanuts. The opportunities to laugh on a higher plane than this, to laugh like Olympians, are seldom given us in this world.

The most successful motion picture drama of the intimate type ever placed before mine eyes was Enoch Arden, produced by Cabanne.

Lillian Gish takes the part of Annie, Alfred Paget impersonates Enoch Arden, and Wallace Reid takes the part of Philip Ray. The play is in four reels of twenty minutes each. It should have been made into three reels by shortening every scene just a bit. Otherwise it is satisfying, and I and my friends have watched it through many times as it has returned to Springfield.

The mood of the original poem is approximated. The story is told with fireside friendliness. The pale Lillian Gish surrounded by happy children gives us many a genre painting on the theme of domesticity. It is a photographic rendering in many ways as fastidious as Tennyson's versification. The scenes on the desert island are some of them commonplace. The shipwreck and the like remind one of other photoplays, but the rest of the production has a mood of its own. Seen several months ago it fills my eye-imagination and eye-memory more than that particular piece of Tennyson's fills word-imagination and word-memory. Perhaps this is because it is pleasing to me as a theorist. It is a sound example of the type of film to which this chapter is devoted. If you cannot get your local manager to bring Enoch Arden, reread that poem of Tennyson's and translate it in your own mind's eye into a gallery of six hundred delicately toned photographs hung in logical order, most of them cosy interior scenes, some of the faces five feet from chin to forehead in the more personal episodes, yet exquisitely fair. Fill in the out-of-door scenes and general gatherings with the appointments of an idyllic English fisher-village, and you will get an approximate conception of what we mean by the Intimate-and-friendly Motion Picture, or the Intimate Picture, as I generally call it, for convenience.

It is a quality, not a defect, of all photoplays that human beings tend to become dolls and mechanisms, and dolls and mechanisms tend to become human. But the haughty, who scorn the moving pictures, cannot rid themselves of the feeling that they are being seduced into going into

some sort of a Punch-and-Judy show. And they think that of course one should not take seriously anything so cheap in price and so appealing to the cross-roads taste. But it is very well to begin in the Punch-and-Judy-show state of mind, and reconcile ourselves to it, and then like good democrats await discoveries. Punch and Judy is the simplest form of marionette performance, and the marionette has a place in every street in history just as the dolls' house has its corner in every palace and cottage. The French in particular have had their great periods of puppet shows; and the Italian tradition survived in America's Little Italy, in New York for many a day; and I will mention in passing that one of Pavlowa's unforgettable dance dramas is The Fairy Doll. Prospective author-producer, why not spend a deal of energy on the photoplay successors of the puppet-plays?

We have the queen of the marionettes already, without the play.

One description of the Intimate-and-friendly Comedy would be the Mary Pickford kind of a story. None has as yet appeared. But we know the Mary Pickford mood. When it is gentlest, most roguish, most exalted, it is a prophecy of what this type should be, not only in the actress, but in the scenario and setting.

Mary Pickford can be a doll, a village belle, or a church angel. Her powers as a doll are hinted at in the title of the production: Such a Little Queen. I remember her when she was a village belle in that film that came out before producers or actors were known by name. It was sugar-sweet. It was called: What the Daisy Said. If these productions had conformed to their titles sincerely, with the highest photoplay art we would have had two more examples for this chapter.

Why do the people love Mary? Not on account of the Daniel Frohman style of handling her appearances. He presents her to us in what are almost the old-fashioned stage terms: the productions energetic and full of painstaking detail but dominated by a dream that is a theatrical hybrid. It is neither good moving picture nor good stage play. Yet Mary could be cast as a cloudy Olympian or a church angel if her managers wanted her to be such. She herself was transfigured in the Dawn of Tomorrow, but the film-version of that play was merely a well mounted melodrama.

Why do the people love Mary? Because of a certain aspect of her face in her highest mood. Botticelli painted her portrait many centuries ago when by some necromancy she appeared to him in this phase of herself. There is in the Chicago Art Institute at the top of the stairs on the north wall a noble copy of a fresco by that painter, the copy by Mrs. MacMonnies. It is very near the Winged Victory of Samothrace. In the picture the muses sit enthroned. The loveliest of them all is a startling replica of Mary.

The people are hungry for this fine and spiritual thing that Botticelli painted in the faces of his muses and heavenly creatures. Because the mob

catch the very glimpse of it in Mary's face, they follow her night after night in the films. They are never quite satisfied with the plays, because the managers are not artists enough to know they should sometimes put her into sacred pictures and not have her always the village hoyden, in plays not even hoydenish. But perhaps in this argument I have but betrayed myself as Mary's infatuated partisan.

So let there be recorded here the name of another actress who is always in the intimate-and-friendly mood and adapted to close-up interiors, Marguerite Clark. She is endowed by nature to act, in the same film, the eight-year-old village pet, the irrepressible sixteen-year-old, and finally the shining bride of twenty. But no production in which she acts that has happened to come under my eye has done justice to these possibilities. The transitions from one of these stages to the other are not marked by the producer with sufficient delicate graduation, emphasis, and contrast. Her plots have been but sugared nonsense, or swashbuckling ups and downs. She shines in a bevy of girls. She has sometimes been given the bevy.

But it is easier to find performers who fit this chapter, than to find films. Having read so far, it is probably not quite nine o'clock in the evening. Go around the corner to the nearest theatre. You will not be apt to find a pure example of the Intimate-and-friendly Moving Picture, but some one or two scenes will make plain the intent of the phrase. Imagine the most winsome tableau that passes before you, extended logically through one or three reels, with no melodramatic interruptions or awful smashes. For a further discussion of these smashes, and other items in this chapter, read the ninth chapter, entitled "Painting-in-Motion."



IN THE GRASS (ON SPAIN)

The Project Gutenberg EBook of **Geography and Plays**, by Gertrude Stein

Occident all Spain the taste.

Milled cautious and plaster and with the heat her trimmed white. Seat silver, seat it next. Poor it in gold hot hoods.

Be cool inside with a monkey tied, with a monkey tied. Be cool inside the mule. Be cool inside with a surrounded tied, a cast, before, behind again, indeed, many.

What in the cut with any money and so, and so the climate is at stake, all the circular receipts are pears and linen is the stall to peep, likely and more the season's chair and little grasses with a pole all the occasion is the wreath and many houses are baked. Many have the same in came and all the light is many wet all the burst in in the man and best to hide is only sweet. All is that and a little haste, a little pleading with a clouded pup all is chance to be the curl that sets and all the winding causes. All of it cucumber.

Cup of lather and moan moan stone grown corn and lead white and any way

culture is power, Culture is power. Culture.

Clambering from a little sea, clambering within bathing, clambering with a necessary rest for eye glasses, clambering beside.

A little green is only seen when they mean to be holder, holder why, coal pepper is a tissue.

Come up shot come up cousin, come up cold salmon pearly, come up, come in, nicely, nicely seen, singing, singing with music, sudden leaves loaves and turtles, taught turtles taught turtles teach hot and cold and little drinks.

Colored huts, cold to din acres of as real birds as stole when. Stole when, it is a lie. It is coming to the seal, it is coming how is it. Language of the hold of the sea sucking dart belt and no gowns in, no gowns in pelting. This is the cane that is short and gold more.

Cold not coin in the ground be sour and special and settled and soiled and a little reason. Come then to sort the kinks in how surrounded is a limb.

Cute numbers, cute to be so bold and so sallow and so in the cream and furled, furled with chalk and lights and high bees and little legs heady and little least little cups, least little cups bellow, bellow electric shadows, real old teachers with a private cake of bean and numbers those numbers. Do they pack.

Spanish cut that means a squeeze and in place of water oil and water more. Mine in the pin and see cuttle cuttle fish call that it is that it is sardine, that it is in pelts and all the same there is paper in poles paper and scratches and nearly places.

Guess a green. The cloud is too hold, collected necessary pastes in that shine of old boil and much part much part in thread and land with a pile. The closeness of a lesson to shirt and the reason for a pale cullass is what is the revolution and retaliation and serpentine illustration and little eagle. A long little beagle, a long little scissor of a kind that has choice all this makes a collation.

All winter is dutiful. All the short stays are digestion. All lines are cylindrical that means that there is leading.

Any roast is not leading. Enough pale ways are scratched.

Spend a height all up and only pup, spend it with the soon. And this when. More call. Cane seat in bottom choice makes a melon within. A melon within then.

A little return bitten with a cake set white with ink and size and

little parlors healthy with a coat. A keen glance wet with accustomed perspiration. No need to dry, no need to current a sand paper with white seams and long shoals. No more mail in splendor and shape to set sights and little steaders in so hat shoot, shut toes, shut toes with a rid of not that, no that, not that.

A peach a peach pear which means a pear early and looking and near near there, exactly pass the light hall where there is no cover no cover to what.

Suppose it is past the mouth which is peculiar and nervous and left and argued and whiled whiled with a tree.

Less a chain than a loss and pieces of pearly paper that means blue not all and the best choice is moreover.

Naturally lovey naturally a period which is regulated by a perfect beam of carpet and more boats does mean something. It is enough.

A handsome beam a handsome beam is quite like the standing of a little peak shut up and needles all not needles. Rest and zest and powder to shout and color and ball and sweet word black.

Believe, I believe you restruck my cold wet and the dun hit it back choose it set.

Come to why, sit in oil save the sos, all the gone sing in a pin save sit it kit, kit all.

Suppose a little chance to hold a door would leave the door closed would that mean that the sun was in, would it mean messages and a kite, would it mean a sold bone and little pies. The necessary shakes makes a whittle. This is not none.

A little pan, that is to please it, a little which is a point to show that co-incident to a lively boat there is nearly places. That is nobody touching. All the plays garden. Little screen. Not collected and spacious not at all so old. And more places have the behold it. The best example is mustard. A little thing. A little no old shut.

Lot in that which is a place surrounded by a fence. A fence is small it is a wall, a wall is tall it is a tunnel, a tunnel is not necessary to a city. A city is celebrated.

Leave piles steady, show it the moon.

Not cut loud and teasing I bleed you, not quite shadow and niece it lises. This is mike when the land is shooken and left peel short is most to sake and not sublime is moist to ramming and leave it whet is most in chance. Nest bite is way back in the clam of dear gold weights with

necessary williams williams wild williams with lamb laden twitches and new-casts and love boosts and most nextily.

Reason with toil and a mark upside down and left boils not knealed with close cracks and moses. A real plume with a no less boiled collander and share.

This is the sport.

Leave it to shut up the right nasal extra ollofactorising sea lights and nearly base more shall sees to the place of the best.

We wide lade the tall tack which squeeze load the no sire and leave more in church maid than rest so to streak.

Mow chases in a spoon and tub, big clam, mow places in a boil a piece. No gas bests.

Look it to peas, loaf it in both spats mean a glass mean in passes in passes a poke and a chair and little cries and a bottle.

A veil and a place seater and a peanut which makes throws so grand.

Never pet never pet a gallon because there is a trunk. A trunk has a bosom. Lead less. Lead prosper pour, poor gold wax and much much tower.

Please place what, place a colored glass. This shows two three eight three nine. This is not sunday. A trouble home.

If a wake means bounded numbers eighty and lately. This is three, show shine five, leave it pare. All that. Seven rough state.

No nuisance is in a married widow with a collection of dear ones in one room nicely. Why is black cooler, black is cooler because spread in makes a little piece of pillow and a coal black lace. This is so best shown.

Suppose it is a parcel of oats and no fat, suppose it is a drill, suppose even that it is a winning centre, this means five and five and five.

Let let let a chief go.

The reason why a laugh is laughed after is that a shed and a shawl and little onions and keys and keys are after all a dog and a curtain and a little less.

Please please please please please.

The more the wet is water the more lilies are tubes and red are rice

rows. A little scene and a tall fanner and a flower a hair flower and a shoes and a shoes boots and rubbish all this makes raising please tease and a little likeness noises.

A gain again pounds. Agate in pets, love biscuits, a time.

Again in leaves of potatoes and cuts, cuts with, with in, in him, a length.

A little belly a little belly cold, speed out stuff, stuff alike, alike shirts and goats and get ups and laid car cases.

All a bill, a bill boaster. Suppose it happened when, when a little shadow was a tail and a can a can was gathering. Gathering then.

Suppose a clandestine roof had tires and could neglect a blue spot suppose it was the end and three places were necessary a like view would be charming charming, charming weather.

Cries is, coming, a leg, all a leg, two utter, more children, no narrow, read a little.

If a horse and a bat and a gathering bleed stir and a chin and a cloth and early ear marks and then such such raiding and little lives and a multiplied purple, all the spool all of it cloth and gets gets out and a piece of reasonable white jacket and a hair a long pail and all bone some binding and a little season silk.

Grand mutter grand mutter shell, real core, real oak plate.

Lara Lara Psyche, Lara Lara three brothers and a mother, sister sister and a new year a new year not christmas, christmas is off off of it. Really.

Three brothers and mother. Leave it fit to a string and there is a ball a ball a hat, a hat a special astracan, a kind of loaf, a real old seventeen checkers. Come to be in, see the table and the look and the little day tomorrow, it is Thursday Friday, Friday, Friday in a day to Sunday, Sunday Sunday, Monday Monday Monday Wednesday and seventy failing out sights.

A son what is a son, a son is in the sitting room and in a central carry ball. A son is not a sister diamond, it is so noted.

Whispers, whispers. Whispers not whiskers, whiskers, whiskers and really hair. Hair. Hair is when two are in and show gum.

Kiss a turn, close.

Suppose close is clothes, clothes is close.

Be less be seen, stain in burr and make pressure. This is bit.

Excel a line, a line is in end purple blue, yes guess show packets and it it it.

Spain is a tame name with a track a track so particular to shame, a track a little release in sold out casts a little next to saleable old cream. Able to pass.

A land steam, a cold cake, a received egg check, an oleander.

Lessen pay a corridor, meal passes.

Necklace, strings.

Necklace, strings, shoulder.

Newly set tea, tea be hold.

Tea behold.

If the soiling carries the head, if the baking measures the pint, if the rudening leans on a strand then shutters.

No need to say a little deaf way is a goat, a goat has a pin in him. Leave glasses, glasses are so cactuses.

Able able ever grass her, get up fern case, get up seize.

Noble and no noble and no next burr, net in and bee net in and bee next to shown miner. Next to beat bean, next to beat bean next to be blender, next to between, next to between in intend intender. In tender.

A laugh in cat, coal hot in. A remembrance of a direct realteration with no bust no buster, no bust here.

Suppose it a glaze a glaze of curtain a fetch in pots a news camper, supper the next old meat oak and kneel kneel with excellent excellent least sands and neck stop. That is.

What you call them what you call them say butter butter and let us leaves and a special a realteration lace a realteration lace.

Next all, next all, inks.

It was a strange name that which when a record of a lucine and naughty bent made it by that that nearly any excellent shade of night glasses made a pleasing and regular hair.

A wet syllable is we are, a wet syllable is we are we in.

A Spanish water and a coop shape mine and legs and reed ridiculous red,
and little lively hue, little lively hue and copper, little lively hue
and copper up.



Avarice, 1556 – Brueghel the Elder

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Exile from Space, by Judith Merril

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[_"They" worried about the impression she'd make. Who_ could _imagine that she'd fall in love, passionately, the way others of her blood must have done?_]

exile from space

by ... Judith Merril

Who _was_ this strange girl who had been born in this place--and still it wasn't her home?...

* * * * *

I don't know where they got the car. We made three or four stops before the last one, and they must have picked it up one of those times. Anyhow, they got it, but they had to make a license plate, because it had the wrong kind on it.

They made me some clothes, too--a skirt and blouse and shoes that looked just like the ones we saw on television. They couldn't make me a lipstick or any of those things, because there was no way to figure out just what the chemical composition was. And they decided I'd be as well off without any driver's license or automobile registration as I would be with papers that weren't exactly perfect, so they didn't bother about making those either.

They were worried about what to do with my hair, and even thought about cutting it short, so it would look more like the women on television, but that was one time I was way ahead of them. I'd seen more shows than anyone else, of course--I watched them almost every minute, from the time they told me I was going--and there was one where I'd seen a way to make braids and put them around the top of your head. It wasn't very comfortable, but I practiced at it until it looked pretty good.

They made me a purse, too. It didn't have anything in it except the diamonds, but the women we saw always seemed to carry them, and they thought it might be a sort of superstition or ritual necessity, and that we'd better not take a chance on violating anything like that.

They made me spend a lot of time practicing with the car, because without a license, I couldn't take a chance on getting into any trouble. I must have put in the better part of an hour starting and stopping and backing that thing, and turning it around, and weaving

through trees and rocks, before they were satisfied.

Then, all of a sudden, there was nothing left to do except _go_. They made me repeat everything one more time, about selling the diamonds, and how to register at the hotel, and what to do if I got into trouble, and how to get in touch with them when I wanted to come back. Then they said good-bye, and made me promise not to stay _too_ long, and said they'd keep in touch the best they could. And then I got in the car, and drove down the hill into town.

I knew they didn't want to let me go. They were worried, maybe even a little afraid I wouldn't want to come back, but mostly worried that I might say something I shouldn't, or run into some difficulties they hadn't anticipated. And outside of that, they knew they were going to miss me. Yet they'd made up their minds to it; they planned it this way, and they felt it was the right thing to do, and certainly they'd put an awful lot of thought and effort and preparation into it.

If it hadn't been for that, I might have turned back at the last minute. Maybe they were worried; but _I_ was petrified. Only of course, I wanted to go, really. I couldn't help being curious, and it never occurred to me then that I might miss them. It was the first time I'd ever been out on my own, and they'd promised me, for years and years, as far back as I could remember, that some day I'd go back, like this, by myself. But....

Going back, when you've been away long enough, is not so much a homecoming as a dream _deja vu_. And for me, at least, the dream was not entirely a happy one. Everything I saw or heard or touched had a sense of haunting familiarity, and yet of _wrongness_, too--almost a nightmare feeling of the oppressively inevitable sequence of events, of faces and features and events just not-quite-remembered and not-quite-known.

I was born in this place, but it was not my home. Its people were not mine; its ways were not mine. All I knew of it was what I had been told, and what I had seen for myself these last weeks of preparation, on the television screen. And the dream-feeling was intensified, at first, by the fact that I did not know _why_ I was there. I knew it had been planned this way, and I had been told it was necessary to complete my education. Certainly I was aware of the great effort that had been made to make the trip possible. But I did not yet understand just _why_.

Perhaps it was just that I had heard and watched and thought and dreamed too much about this place, and now I was actually there, the reality was--not so much a disappointment as--just sort of _unreal_. Different from what I knew when I _didn't_ know.

The road unwound in a spreading spiral down the mountainside. Each

time I came round, I could see the city below, closer and larger, and less distinct. From the top, with the sunlight sparkling on it, it had been a clean and gleaming pattern of human civilization. Halfway down, the symmetry was lost, and the smudge and smoke began to show.

Halfway down, too, I began to pass places of business: restaurants and gas stations and handicraft shops. I wanted to stop. For half an hour now I had been out on my own, and I still hadn't seen any of the people, except the three who had passed me behind the wheels of their cars, going up the road. One of the shops had a big sign on it, "COME IN AND LOOK AROUND." But I kept going. One thing I understood was that it was absolutely necessary to have money, and that I must stop nowhere, and attempt nothing, till after I had gotten some.

Farther down, the houses began coming closer together, and then the road stopped winding around, and became almost straight. By that time, I was used to the car, and didn't have to think about it much, and for a little while I really enjoyed myself. I could see into the houses sometimes, through the windows, and at one, a woman was opening the door, coming out with a broom in her hand. There were children playing in the yards. There were cars of all kinds parked around the houses, and I saw dogs and a couple of horses, and once a whole flock of chickens.

But just where it was beginning to get really interesting, when I was coming into the little town before the city, I had to stop watching it all, because there were too many other people driving. That was when I began to understand all the fuss about licenses and tests and traffic regulations. Watching it on television, it wasn't anything like being in the middle of it!

Of course, what I ran into there was really nothing; I found that out when I got into the city itself. But just at first, it seemed pretty bad. And I still don't understand it. These people are pretty bright mechanically. You'd think anybody who could _build_ an automobile--let alone an atom bomb--could _drive_ one easily enough. Especially with a lifetime to learn in. Maybe they just like to live dangerously....

It was a good thing, though, that I'd already started watching out for what the other drivers were doing when I hit my first red light. That was something I'd overlooked entirely, watching street scenes on the screen, and I guess they'd never noticed either. They must have taken it for granted, the way I did, that people stopped their cars out of courtesy from time to time to let the others go by. As it was, I stopped because the others did, and just happened to notice that they began again when the light changed to green. It's really a very good system; I don't see why they don't have them at all the intersections.

* * * * *

From the first light, it was eight miles into the center of Colorado Springs. A sign on the road said so, and I was irrationally pleased when the speedometer on the car confirmed it. Proud, I suppose, that these natives from my own birth-place were such good gadgeteers. The road was better after that, too, and the cars didn't dart in and out off the sidestreets the way they had before. There was more traffic on the highway, but most of them behaved fairly intelligently. Until we got into town, that is. After that, it was everybody-for-himself, but by then I was prepared for it.

I found a place to park the car near a drugstore. That was the first thing I was supposed to do. Find a drugstore, where there would likely be a telephone directory, and go in and look up the address of a hock shop. I had a little trouble parking the car in the space they had marked off, but I could see from the way the others were stationed that you were supposed to get in between the white lines, with the front of the car next to the post on the sidewalk. I didn't know what the post was for, until I got out and read what it said, and then I didn't know what to do, because I didn't _have_ any money. Not yet. And I didn't dare get into any trouble that might end up with a policeman asking to see my license, which always seemed to be the first thing they did on television, when they talked to anybody who was driving a car. I got back in the car and wriggled my way out of the hole between the other cars, and tried to think what to do. Then I remembered seeing a sign that said "Free Parking" somewhere, not too far away, and went back the way I'd come.

There was a sort of park, with a fountain spraying water all over the grass, and a big building opposite, and the white lines here were much more sensible. They were painted in diagonal strips, so you could get in and out quite easily, without all that backing and twisting and turning. I left the car there, and remembered to take the keys with me, and started walking back to the drugstore.

* * * * *

That was when it hit me.

Up to then, beginning I guess when I drove that little stretch coming into Manitou, with the houses on the hills, and the children and yards and dogs and chickens, I'd begun to feel almost as if I belonged here. The people seemed so _much_ like me--as long as I wasn't right up against them. From a little distance, you'd think there was no difference at all. Then, I guess, when I was close enough to notice, driving through town, I'd been too much preoccupied with the car. It didn't really get to me till I got out and started walking.

They were all so _big_....

They were big, and their faces and noses and even the pores of their

skin were too big. And their voices were too loud. And they _smelled_.

I didn't notice that last much till I got into the drugstore. Then I thought I was going to suffocate, and I had a kind of squeezing upside-down feeling in my stomach and diaphragm and throat, which I didn't realize till later was what they meant by "being sick." I stood over the directory rack, pretending to read, but really just struggling with my insides, and a man came along and shouted in my ear something that sounded like, "Vvvm trubbb lll-lll-lll ay-dee?" (I didn't get that sorted out for hours afterwards, but I don't think I'll ever forget just the way it sounded at the time. Of course, he meant, "Having trouble, little lady?") But all I knew at the time was he was too big and smelled of all kinds of things that were unfamiliar and slightly sickening. I couldn't answer him. All I could do was turn away so as not to breathe him, and try to pretend I knew what I was doing with the directory. Then he hissed at me ("Sorry, no offense," I figured out later), and said clearly enough so I could understand even then, "Just trying to help," and walked away.

As soon as he was gone, I walked out myself. Directory or no directory, I had to get out of that store. I went back to where I'd left the car, but instead of getting in it, I sat down on a bench in the park, and waited till the turmoil inside me began to quiet down.

I went back into that drugstore once before I left, purposely, just to see if I could pin down what it was that had bothered me so much, because I never reacted that strongly afterwards, and I wondered if maybe it was just that it was the first time I was inside one of their buildings. But it was more than that; that place was a regular snake-pit of a treatment for a stranger, believe me! They had a tobacco counter, and a lunch counter and a perfume-and-toiletries section, and a nut-roasting machine, and just to top it off, in the back of the store, an open-to-look-at (_and_ smell) pharmaceutical center! Everything, all mixed together, and compounded with stale human sweat, which was also new to me at the time. And no air conditioning.

Most of the air conditioning they have is bad enough on its own, with chemical smells, but those are comparatively easy to get used to ... and I'll take them _any_ time, over what I got in that first dose of _Odeur d'Earth_.

* * * * *

Anyhow, I sat on the park bench about fifteen minutes, I guess, letting the sun and fresh air seep in, and trying to tabulate and memorize as many of the components of that drugstore smell as I could, for future reference. I was simply going to have to adjust to them, and next time I wanted to be prepared.

All the same, I didn't feel prepared to go back into the same place. Maybe another store wouldn't be quite as bad. I started walking in the opposite direction, staying on the wide main street, where all the big stores seemed to be, and two blocks down, I ran into luck, because there was a big bracket sticking out over the sidewalk from the front of a store halfway down a side street, and it had the three gold balls hanging from it that I knew, from television, meant the kind of place I wanted. When I walked down to it, I saw too that they had a sign painted over the window: "We buy old gold and diamonds."

Just _how_ lucky that was, I didn't realize till quite some time later. I was going to look in the Classified Directory for "Hock Shops." I didn't know any other name for them then.

Inside, it looked exactly like what I expected, and even the smell was nothing to complain about. Camphor and dust and mustiness were strong enough to cover most of the sweaty smell, and those were smells of a kind I'd experienced before, in other places.

The whole procedure was reassuring, because it all went just the way it was supposed to, and I knew how to behave. I'd seen it in a show, and the man behind the grilled window even _looked_ like the man on the screen, and talked the same way.

"What can we do for you, girlie?"

"I'd like to sell a diamond," I told him.

He didn't say anything at first, then he looked impatient. "You got it with you?"

"Oh ... yes!" I opened my purse, and took out one of the little packages, and unwrapped it, and handed it to him. He screwed the lens into his eye, and walked back from the window and put it on a little scale, and turned back and unscrewed the lens and looked at me.

"Where'd you get this, lady?" he asked me.

"It's mine," I said. I knew just how to do it. We'd gone over this half a dozen times before I left, and he was behaving exactly the way we'd expected.

"I don't know," he said. "Can't do much with an unset stone like this...." He pursed his lips, tossed the diamond carelessly in his hand, and then pushed it back at me across the counter. I had to keep myself from smiling. It was just the way they'd said it would be. The people here were still in the Mech Age, of course, and not nearly conscious enough to communicate anything at all complex or abstract any way except verbally. But there is nothing abstract about avarice, and between what I'd been told to expect, and what I could feel

pouring out of him, I knew precisely what was going on in his mind.

"You mean you don't _want_ it?" I said. "I thought it was worth quite a lot...."

"Might have been once." He shrugged. "You can't do much with a stone like that any more. Where'd you get it, girlie?"

"My mother gave it to me. A long time ago. I wouldn't sell it, except.... Look," I said, and didn't have to work hard to sound desperate, because in a way I was. "Look, it must be worth _some_thing?"

He picked it up again. "Well ... what do you want for it?"

That went on for quite a while. I knew what it was supposed to be worth, of course, but I didn't hope to get even half of that. He offered seventy dollars, and I asked for five hundred, and after a while he gave me three-fifty, and I felt I'd done pretty well--for a greenhorn. I put the money in my purse, and went back to the car, and on the way I saw a policeman, so I stopped and asked him about a hotel. He looked me up and down, and started asking questions about how old I was, and what was my name and where did I live, and I began to realize that being so much smaller than the other people was going to make life complicated. I told him I'd come to visit my brother in the Academy, and he smiled, and said, "Your _brother_, is it?" Then he told me the name of a place just outside of town, near the Academy. It wasn't a hotel; it was a _mo_tel, which I didn't know about at that time, but he said I'd be better off there. A lot of what he said went right over my head at the time; later I realized what he meant about "a nice respectable couple" running the place. I found out later on, too, that he called them up to ask them to keep an eye on me; he thought I was a nice girl, but he was worried about my being alone there.

By this time, I was getting hungry, but I thought I'd better go and arrange about a place to stay first. I found the motel without much trouble, and went in and registered; I knew how to do that, at least--I'd seen it plenty of times. They gave me a key, and the man who ran the place asked me did I want any help with my bags.

"Oh, no," I said. "No, thanks. I haven't got much."

I'd forgotten all about that, and they'd never thought about it either! These people always have a lot of different clothes, not just one set, and you're supposed to have a suitcase full of things when you go to stay anyplace. I said I was hungry anyway, and wanted to go get something to eat, and do a couple of other things--I didn't say what--before I got settled. So the woman walked over with me, and showed me which cabin it was, and asked was everything all right?

It looked all right to me. The room had a big bed in it, with sheets and a blanket and pillows and a bedspread, just like the ones I'd seen on television. And there was a chest of drawers, and a table with more small drawers in it, and two chairs and a mirror and one door that went into a closet and one that led to the bathroom. The fixtures in there were a little different from the ones they'd made for me to practice in, but functionally they seemed about the same.

I didn't look for any difficulty with anything there except the bed, and that wasn't _her_ fault, so I assured her everything was just fine, and let her show me how to operate the gas-burner that was set in the wall for heat. Then we went out, and she very carefully locked the door, and handed me the key.

"You better keep that door locked," she said, just a little sharply. "You never know...."

I wanted to ask her _what_ you never know, but had the impression that it was something _every_body was supposed to know, so I just nodded and agreed instead.

"You want to get some lunch," she said then, "there's a place down the road isn't too bad. Clean, anyhow, and they don't cater too much to those ... well, it's clean." She pointed the way; you could see the sign from where we were standing. I thanked her, and started the car, and decided I might as well go there as anyplace else, especially since I could see she was watching to find out whether I did or not.

* * * * *

These people are all too big. Or almost all of them. But the man behind the counter at the diner was enormous. He was tall and fat with a beefy red face and large open pores and a fleshy mound of a nose. I didn't like to look at him, and when he talked, he boomed so loud I could hardly understand him. On top of all that, the smell in that place was awful: not quite as bad as the drugstore, but some ways similar to it. I kept my eyes on the menu, which was full of unfamiliar words, and tried to remember that I was hungry.

The man was shouting at me--or it was more like growling, I guess--and I couldn't make out the words at first. He said it again, and I sorted out syllables and matched them with the words on the card, and then I got it:

"Goulash is nice today, miss...."

I didn't know what goulash was, and the state my stomach was in, with the smells, I decided I'd better play safe, and ordered a glass of milk, and some vegetable soup.

The milk had a strange taste to it. Not _bad_--just _different_. But of course, this came from cows. That was all right. But the vegetable soup...!

It was quite literally putrid, made as near as I could figure out from dead animal juices, in which vegetables had been soaked and cooked till any trace of flavor or nourishment was entirely removed. I took one taste of that, and then I realized what the really nauseating part of the odor was, in the diner and the drugstore both. It was rotten meat, dead for some time, and then heated in preparation for eating.

The crackers that came with the soup were good; they had a nice salty tang. I ordered more of those, with another glass of milk, and sat back sipping slowly, trying to adjust to that smell, now that I realized I'd probably find it anywhere I could find food.

After a while, I got my insides enough in order so that I could look around a little and see the place, and the other people in it. That was when I turned around and saw Larry sitting next to me.

He was beautiful. He _is_ beautiful. I know that's not what you're supposed to say about a man, and he wouldn't like it, but I can only say what I see, and of course that's partly a matter of my own training and my own feelings about myself.

At home on the ship, I always wanted to cut off my hair, because it was so black, and my skin was so white, and they didn't go together. But they wouldn't let me; they liked it that way, I guess, but _I_ didn't. No child wants to feel like a freak, and nobody else had hair like that, or dead-white colorless skin, either.

Then, when I went down there, and saw all the humans, I was still a freak because I was so small.

Larry's small, too. Almost as small as I am. And he's all one color. He has hair, of course, but it's so light, and his skin is so dark (both from the sun, I found out), that he looks just about the same lovely golden color all over. Or at least as much of him as showed when I saw him that time, in the diner.

He was beautiful, and he was my size, and he didn't have ugly rough skin or big heavy hands. I stared at him, and I felt like grabbing on to him to make sure he didn't get away.

After a while I realized my mouth was half-open, and I was still holding a cracker, and I remembered that this was very bad manners. I put the cracker down and closed my mouth. He smiled. I didn't know if he was laughing at the odd way I was acting, or just being friendly, but I smiled back anyhow.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I mean, hello. How do you do, and I'm sorry if I startled you. I shouldn't have been staring."

"_You_," I said, and meant to finish, _You were staring?_ But he went right on talking, so that I couldn't finish.

"I don't know what else you can expect, if you go around looking like that," he said.

"I'm sorry...." I started again.

"And you should be," he said sternly. "Anybody who walks into a place like this in the middle of a day like this looking the way you do has got to expect to get stared at a little."

The thing is, I wasn't used to the language; not used _enough_. I could communicate all right, and even understand some jokes, and I knew the spoken language, not some formal unusable version, because I learned it mostly watching those shows on the television screen. But I got confused this time, because "looking" means two different things, active and passive, and I was thinking about how I'd been _looking at_ him, and....

That was my lucky day. I didn't want him to be angry at me, and the way I saw it, he was perfectly justified in scolding me, which is what I thought he was doing. But I _knew_ he wasn't really angry; I'd have felt it if he was. So I said, "You're right. It was very rude of me, and I don't blame you for being annoyed. I won't do it any more."

He started laughing, and this time I knew it was friendly. Like I said, that was my lucky day; _he_ thought I was being witty. And, from what he's told me since, I guess he realized then that _I_ felt friendly too, because before that he'd just been bluffing it out, not knowing how to get to know me, and afraid _I_'d be sore at _him_, just for talking to me!

Which goes to show that sometimes you're better off not being _too_ familiar with the local customs.

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The trouble was there were too many things I didn't know, too many small ways to trip myself up. Things they couldn't have foreseen, or if they did, couldn't have done much about. All it took was a little caution and a lot of alertness, plus one big important item: staying in the background--not getting to know any one person too well--not giving any single individual a chance to observe too much about me.

But Larry didn't mean to let me do that. And ... I didn't want him to.

He asked questions; I tried to answer them. I did know enough at least of the conventions to realize that I didn't have to give detailed answers, or could, at any point, act offended at being questioned so much. I _didn't_ know enough to realize that reluctance or irritation on my part wouldn't have made him go away. We sat on those stools at the diner for most of an hour, talking, and after a little while I found I could keep the conversation on safer ground by asking _him_ about himself, and about the country thereabouts. He seemed to enjoy talking.

Eventually, he had to go back to work. As near as I could make out, he was a test-pilot, or something like it, for a small experimental aircraft plant near the city. He lived not too far from where I was staying, and he wanted to see me that evening.

I hadn't told him where the motel was, and I had at least enough caution left not to tell him, even then. I did agree to meet him at the diner, but for lunch the next day again, instead of that evening. For one thing, I had a lot to do; and for another, I'd seen enough on television shows to know that an evening date was likely to be pretty long-drawn-out, and I wasn't sure I could stand up under that much close scrutiny. I had some studying-up to do first. But the lunch-date was fine; the thought of not seeing him at all was terrifying--as if he were an old friend in a world full of strangers. That was how I felt, that first time, maybe just because he was almost as small as I. But I think it was more than that, really.

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I drove downtown again, and found a store that seemed to sell all kinds of clothing for women. Then when I got inside, I didn't know where to start, or what to get. I thought of just buying one of everything, so as to fill up a suitcase; the things I had on seemed to be perfectly satisfactory for actual _wearing_ purposes. They were quite remarkably--when you stopped to think of it--similar to what most of the women I'd seen that day were wearing, and of course they weren't subject to the same problems of dirtying and wrinkling and such as the clothes in the store were.

I walked around for a while, trying to figure out what all the different items, shapes, sizes, and colors, were for. Some racks and counters had signs, but most of them were unfamiliar words like _brunchies_, or _Bermudas_ or _scuffs_; or else they seemed to be mislabeled, like _dusters_ for a sort of button-down dress, and _Postage Stamp Girdles_ at one section of a long counter devoted to "Foundation Garments." For half an hour or so, I wandered around in there, shaking my head every time a saleswoman came up to me, because I didn't know, and couldn't figure out, what to ask for, or how to ask for it.

The thing was, I didn't dare draw too much attention to myself by doing or saying the wrong things. I'd have to find out more about clothes, somehow, before I could do much buying.

I went out, and on the same block I found a show-window full of suitcases. That was easy. I went in and pointed to one I liked, and paid for it, and walked out with it, feeling a little braver. After all, nobody had to know there was nothing in it. On the corner, I saw some books displayed in the window of a drug store. It took all the courage I had to go in there, after my first trip into one that looked very much like it, but I wanted a dictionary. This place didn't smell quite so strong; I suppose the pharmacy was enclosed in back, and I don't believe it had a lunch counter. Anyhow, I got in and out quickly, and walked back to the car, and sat down with the dictionary.

It turned out to be entirely useless, at least as far as _brunchies_ and _Bermudas_ were concerned. It had "scuff, v.," with a definition; "v.," I found out, meant _verb_, so that wasn't the word I wanted, but when I remembered the slippers on the counter with the sign, it made sense in a way.

Not enough sense, though. I decided to forget about the clothes for a while. The next problem was a driver's license.

The policeman that morning had been helpful, if over-interested, and since policemen directed traffic, they ought to have the information I wanted. I found one of them standing on a streetcorner looking not too busy, and asked him, and if his hair hadn't been brown instead of reddish (and only half there) I'd have thought it was the same one I talked to before. He wanted to know how old I was, and where was I from, and what I was doing there, and did I have a car, and was I _sure_ I was nineteen?

Well, of course, I wasn't sure, but they'd told me that by the local reckoning, that was my approximate age. And I almost slipped and said I _had_ a car, until I realized that I didn't have a right to drive one till I had a license. After he asked that one question, I began to feel suspicious about everything else he asked, and the interest he expressed. He was helpful, but I had to remember too, that it was the police who were charged with watching for suspicious characters, and--well, it was the last time I asked a policeman for information.

He _did_ tell me where I could rent a car to take my road test, though, and where to apply for the test. The Courthouse turned out to be the big building behind the square where I'd parked the car that morning, and arranging for the test turned out to be much simpler than, by then, I expected it to be. In a way, I suppose, all the questions I had to answer when I talked to the policeman had prepared me for the official session--though they didn't seem nearly so

inquisitive there.

By this time, I'd come to expect that they wouldn't believe my age when I told them. The woman at the window behind the counter wanted to see a "birth certificate," and I produced the one piece of identification I had; an ancient and yellowed document they had kept for me all these years. From the information it contained, I suspected it might even _be_ a birth certificate; whether or not, it apparently satisfied her, and after that all she wanted was things like my address and height and weight. Fortunately, they had taken the trouble, back on the ship, to determine these statistics for me, because things like that were always coming up on television shows, especially when people were being questioned by the police. For the address, of course, I used the motel. The rest I knew, and I guess we had the figures close enough to right so that at least the woman didn't question any of it.

I had my road test about half an hour later, in a rented car, and the examiner said I did very well. He seemed surprised, and I don't wonder, considering the way most of those people contrive to mismanage a simple mechanism like an automobile. I guess when they say Earth is still in the Mechanical Age, what they mean is that humans are just _learning_ about machines.

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The biggest single stroke of luck I had at any time came during that road test. We passed a public-looking building with a sign in front that I didn't understand.

"What's that place?" I asked the examiner, and he said, as if anyone would know what he meant, "That? Oh--the Library."

I looked it up in my dictionary as soon as I was done at the License Bureau, and when I found out what it was, everything became a great deal simpler.

There was a woman who worked there, who showed me, without any surprise at my ignorance, just how the card catalogue worked, and what the numbering system meant; she didn't ask me how old I was, or any other questions, or demand any proof of any kind to convince her I had a right to use the place. She didn't even bother me much with questions about what I was looking for. I told her there were a _lot_ of things I wanted to know, and she seemed to think that was a good answer, and said if she could help me any way, not to hesitate to ask, and then she left me alone with those drawers and drawers full of letter-and-number keys to all the mysteries of an alien world.

I found a book on how to outfit your daughter for college, that started with underwear and worked its way through to jewelry and

cosmetics. I also found a whole shelf full of law books, and in one of them, specific information about the motor vehicle regulations in different States. There was a wonderful book about diamonds and other precious stones, particularly fascinating because it went into the chemistry of the different stones, and gave me the best measuring-stick I found at any time to judge the general level of technology of that so-called Mechanical Age.

That was all I had time for, I couldn't believe it was so late, when the librarian came and told me they were closing up, and I guess my disappointment must have showed all over me, because she asked if I wouldn't like to have a card, so I could take books home?

I found out all I needed to get a card was identification. I was supposed to have a reference, too, but the woman said she thought perhaps it would be all right without one, in my case. And then, when I wanted to take a volume of the Encyclopedia Americana, she said they didn't usually circulate that, but if I thought I could bring it back within a day or two....

I promised to, and I never did, and out of everything that happened, that's the one thing I feel badly about. I think she must have been a very unusual and _good_ sort of woman, and I wish I had kept my promise to her.

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Some of the stores downtown were still open. I bought the things I'd be expected to have, as near as I could make out from the book on college girls: panties and a garter belt and a brassiere, and stockings. A slip and another blouse, and a coat, because even in the early evening it was beginning to get chilly. Then the salesgirl talked me into gloves and a scarf and some earrings. I was halfway back to the car when I remembered about night clothes, and went back for a gown and robe and slippers. That didn't begin to complete the college girls' list, but it seemed like a good start. I'd need a dress, too, I thought, if I ever did go out with Larry in the evening ... but that could wait.

I put everything into the suitcase, and drove back to the motel. On the way, I stopped at a food store, and bought a large container of milk, and some crackers, and some fruit--oranges and bananas and apples. Back in my room, I put everything away in the drawers, and then sat down with my book and my food, and had a wonderful time. I was hungry, and everything tasted good, away from the dead meat smells, and what with clothes in the drawers and everything, I was beginning to feel like a real Earth-girl.

I even took a bath in the bathroom.

A good long one. Next to the library, that's the thing I miss most. It

would be even better, if they made the tubs bigger, so you could swim around some. But just getting wet all over like that, and splashing in the water, is fun. Of course, we could never spare enough water for that on the ship.

Altogether, it was a good evening; everything was fine until I tried to sleep in that bed. I felt as if I was being suffocated all over. The floor was almost as bad, but in a different way. And once I got to sleep, I guess I slept well enough, because I felt fine in the morning. But then, I think I must have been on a mild oxygen jag all the time I was down there; nothing seemed to bother me too much. That morning, I felt so good I worked up my courage to go into a restaurant again--a different one. The smell was beginning to be familiar, and I could manage better. I experimented with a cereal called oatmeal, which was delicious, then I went back to the motel, packed up all my new belongings, left the key on the desk--as instructed by the sign on the door--and started out for Denver.

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Denver, according to the Encyclopedia Americana, is more of a true metropolitan area than Colorado Springs; that means--on Earth--that it is dirtier, more crowded, far less pleasant to look at or live in, and a great deal more convenient and efficient to do business in. In Denver, and with the aid of a Colorado driver's license for casual identification, I was able to sell two of my larger diamonds fairly quickly, at two different places, for something approximating half of their full value. Then I parked the car they had given me on a side street, took my suitcase, coat, and book with me, and walked to the nearest car sales lot. I left the keys in the old car, for the convenience of anyone who might want it.

Everything went extraordinarily smoothly, with just one exception. I had found out everything I needed to know in that library, except that when dealing with humans, one must always allow for waste time. If I had realized that at the time I left Colorado Springs that morning, everything might have turned out very differently indeed--although when I try to think just what other way it _could_ have turned out, I don't quite know ... and I wonder, too, how much they knew, or planned, before they sent me down there....

This much is sure: if I hadn't assumed that a 70-mile trip, with a 60-mile average speed limit, would take approximately an hour and a half, and if I had realized that buying an automobile was not the same simple process as buying a nightgown, I wouldn't have been late for my luncheon appointment. And if I'd been there on time, I'd never have made the date for that night. As it was, I started out at seven o'clock in the morning, and only by exceeding the speed limit on the last twenty miles of the return trip did I manage to pull into that diner parking space at five minutes before two.

His car was still there!

It is so easy to look back and spot the instant of recognition or of error. My relief when I saw his car ... my delight when I walked in and saw and _felt_ his mixture of surprise and joy that I had come, with disappointment and frustration because it was so late, and he had to leave almost immediately. And my complete failure, in the midst of the complexities of these inter-reactions, to think logically, or to recognize that his ordinary perceptions were certainly the equivalent of my own....

At that moment, I wasn't thinking _about_ any of these things. I spent a delirious sort of five minute period absorbing his feelings about me, and releasing my own at him. I hadn't planned to do it, not so soon, not till I knew much more than I did--perhaps after another week's reading and going about--but when he said that since I'd got there so late for lunch, I'd _have_ to meet him for dinner, I found I agreed with him perfectly.

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That afternoon, I bought a dress. This, too, took a great deal of time, even more than the car, because in the one case I simply had to look at a number of component parts, and listen to the operation of the motor, and feel for the total response of the mechanism, to determine whether it was suitable or not--but in the other, I had nothing to guide me but my own untrained taste, and the dubious preferences of the salesgirl, plus what I _thought_ Larry's reactions _might_ be. Also, I had to determine, without seeming too ignorant, just what sort of dress might be suitable for a dinner date--and without knowing for sure just how elaborate Larry's plans for the evening might be.

I learned a lot, and was startled to find that I enjoyed myself tremendously. But I couldn't make up my mind, and bought three dresses instead of one. It was after that, emboldened by pleasure and success, that I went back to that first drugstore. The Encyclopedia volume I had taken from the library, besides containing the information I wanted on Colorado, had an article on Cosmetics. I decided powder was unnecessary, although I could understand easily enough how important it must be to the native women, with their thick skin and large pores and patchy coloring; that accounted for the fact that the men were mostly so much uglier ... and I wondered if Larry used it, and if that was why his skin looked so much better than the others'.

Most of the perfumes made me literally ill; a few were inoffensive or mildly pleasant, if you thought of them just as smells, and not as something to be mistaken for one's _own_ smell. Apparently, though, from the amount of space given over to them on the counter, and the

number of advertisements I had seen or heard for one brand or another, they were an essential item. I picked out a faint lavender scent, and then bought some lipstick, mascara, and eyebrow pencil. On these last purchases, it was a relief to find that I had no opportunity to display my ignorance about nuances of coloring, or the merits of one brand over another. The woman behind the counter knew exactly what I should have, and was not interested in hearing any of my opinions. She even told me how to apply the mascara, which was helpful, since the other two were obvious, and anyhow I'd seen them used on television, and the lipstick especially I had seen women use since I'd been here.

It turned out to be a little more difficult than it looked, when I tried it. Cosmetics apparently take a good deal more experience than clothing, if you want to have it look _right_. Right by _their_ standards, I mean, so that your face becomes a formal design, and will register only a minimum of actual emotion or response.

I was supposed to meet Larry in the cocktail lounge of a hotel in Manitou Springs, the smaller town I'd passed through the day before on my way down from the mountain. I drove back that way now, with all my possessions in my new car, including the purse that held not only my remaining diamonds and birth certificate, but also a car registration, driver's license, wallet, money, and makeup. A little more than halfway there, I saw a motel with a "Vacancy" sign out, and an attractive clean look about it. I pulled in and got myself a room with no more concern than if I'd been doing that sort of thing all my life.

This time there was no question about my age, nor was there later on that evening, in the cocktail lounge or anywhere else. I suppose it was the lipstick that made the difference, plus a certain increase in self-confidence; apparently I wasn't too small to be an adult, provided I looked and acted like one.

The new room did not have a bathtub. There was a shower, which was fun, but not as much as the tub had been. Dressing was _not_ fun, and when I was finished, the whole effect still didn't look right, in terms of my own mental image of an Earth-woman dressed for a date.

It was the shoes, of course. This kind of dress wanted high heels. I had tried a pair in the store, and promptly rejected the whole notion. Now I wondered if I'd been too hasty, but I realized I could not conceivably have added that discomfort to the already-pressing difficulties of stockings and garter belt.

This last problem got so acute when I sat down and tried to drive the car, that I did some thinking about it, and decided to take them off. It seemed to me that I'd seen a lot of bare legs with flat heels. It was only with high heels that stockings were a real necessity. Anyhow, I pulled the car over to the side on an empty stretch of road, and wriggled out of things with a great deal of difficulty. I don't

believe it made much difference in my appearance. No one _seemed_ to notice, and I do think the lack of heels was more important.

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All of this has been easy to put down. The next part is harder: partly because it's so important; partly because it's personal; partly because I just don't remember it all as clearly.

Larry was waiting for me when I got to the hotel. He stood up and walked over to me, looking at me as if I were the only person in the room besides himself, or as if he'd been waiting all his life, and only just that moment saw what it was he'd been waiting for. I don't know how I looked at him, but I know how I felt all of a sudden, and I don't think I can express it very well.

It was odd, because of the barriers to communication. The way he felt and the way I did are not things to put into words, and although I couldn't help but feel the impact of _his_ emotion, I had to remember that he was deaf-and-blind to mine. All I could get from him for that matter, was a sort of generalized _noise_, loud but confused, without any features or details.

He smiled, and I smiled, and he said, "I didn't know if you'd really come ..." and I said, "Am I late?" and he said, "Not much. What do you want to drink?"

I knew he meant something with alcohol in it, and I didn't dare, not till I'd experimented all alone first.

"Could I get some orange juice?" I asked.

He smiled again. "You can get anything you want. You don't drink?" He took my arm, and walked me over to a booth in the back corner, and went on without giving me a chance to answer. "No, of course you don't. Just orange juice and milk. Listen, Tina, I've been scared to ask you, but we might as well get it over with. How old are you anyhow?..." We sat down, but he still didn't give me a chance to answer. "No, that's not the right question. Who are you? What are you? What makes a girl like you exist at all? How come they let you run around on your own like this? Does your mother.... Never mind me, honey. I've got no business asking anything. Sufficient unto the moment, and all that. I'm just talking so much because I'm so nervous. I haven't felt like this since ... since I first went up for a solo in a Piper Cub. I didn't think you'd come, and you did, and you're still here in spite of me and my dumb yap. Orange juice for the lady, please," he told the waiter, "and a beer for me. Draft."

I just sat there. As long as he kept talking, I didn't have to. He looked just as beautiful as he had in the diner, only maybe more so.

His skin was smoother; I suppose he'd just shaved. And he was wearing a tan suit just a shade darker than his skin, which was just a shade darker than his hair, and there was absolutely nothing I could say out loud in his language that would mean anything at all, so I waited to see if he'd start talking again.

"You're not mad at me, Tina?"

I smiled and shook my head.

"Well, _say_ something then."

"It's more fun listening to you."

"You say that just like you mean it ... or do you mean _funny_?"

"No. I mean that it's hard for me to talk much. I don't know how to say a lot of the things I want to say. And most people don't say anything when they talk, and I don't like listening to their voices, but I do like yours, and ... I can't help liking what you say ... it's always so _nice_. About me, I mean. Complimentary. Flattering."

"You were right the first time. And you seem to be able to say what you mean very clearly."

Which was just the trouble. Not only able to, but unable not to. It didn't take any special planning or remembering to say or act the necessary lies to other humans. But Larry was the least alien person I'd ever known. Dishonesty to him was like lying to myself. Playing a role for him was pure schizophrenia.

Right then, I knew it was a mistake. I should never have made that date, or at least not nearly so soon. But even as I thought that, I had no more intention of cutting it short or backing out than I did of going back to the ship the next day. I just tried not to talk too much, and trusted to the certain knowledge that I was as important to him as he was to me--so perhaps whatever mistakes I made, whatever I said that sounded _wrong_, he would either accept or ignore or forgive.

But of course you can't just sit all night and say nothing. And the simplest things could trip me up. Like when he asked if I'd like to dance, and all I had to say was "No, thanks," and instead, because I _wanted_ to try it, I said, "I don't know how."

Or when he said something about going to a movie, and I agreed enthusiastically, and he gave me a choice of three different ones that he wanted to see ... "Oh, anyone," I told him. "You're easy to please," he said, but he insisted on my making a choice. There was something he called "an old-Astaire-Rogers," and something else that

was made in England, and one current American one with stars I'd seen on television. I wanted to see either of the others. I could have said so, or I could have named one, any one. Instead I heard myself blurting out that I'd never been to a movie.

At that point, of course, he began to ask questions in earnest. And at that point, schizoid or not, I had to lie. It was easier, though, because I'd been thoroughly briefed in my story, for just such emergencies as this--and because I could talk more or less uninterruptedly, with only pertinent questions thrown in, and without having to react so much to the emotional tensions between us.

I told him how my parents had died in an automobile accident when I was a baby; how my two uncles had claimed me at the hospital; about the old house up on the mountainside, and the convent school, and the two old men who hated the evils of the world; about the death of the first uncle, and at long last the death of the second, and the lawyers and the will and everything--the whole story, as we'd worked it out back on the ship.

It answered everything, explained everything--even the unexpected item of not being able to eat meat. My uncles were vegetarians, which was certainly a harmless eccentricity compared to most of the others I credited them with.

As a story, it was pretty far-fetched, but it hung together--and in certain ways, it wasn't even _too_ far removed from the truth. It was, anyhow, the closest thing to the truth that I could tell--and I therefore delivered it with a fair degree of conviction. Of course it wasn't designed to stand up to the close and personal inspection Larry gave it; but then he _wanted_ to believe me.

He seemed to swallow it. What he did, of course, was something any man who relies, as he did, on his reflexes and responses to stay alive, learns to do very early--he filed all questions and apparent discrepancies for reference, or for thinking over when there was time, and proceeded to make the most of the current situation.

We both made the most of it. It was a wonderful evening, from that point on. We went to the Astaire-Rogers picture, and although I missed a lot of the humor, since it was contemporary stuff from a time before I had any chance to learn about Earth, the music and dancing were fun. Later on, I found that dancing was not nearly as difficult or intricate as it looked--at least not with Larry. All I had to do was give in to a natural impulse to let my body follow his. It felt wonderful, from the feet on up.

Finally, we went back to the hotel, where we'd left my car, and I started to get out of his, but he reached out an arm, and stopped me.

"There's something else I guess you never did," he said. His voice sounded different from before. He put both his hands on my shoulders, and pulled me toward him, and leaned over and kissed me.

I'd seen it, of course, on television.

I'd seen it, but I had no idea....

That first time, it was something I felt on my lips, and felt so sweetly and so strongly that the rest of me seemed to melt away entirely. I had no other sensations, except in that one place where his mouth touched mine. That was the first time.

When it stopped, the world stopped, and I began again, but I had to sort out the parts and pieces and put them all together to find out who I was. While I did this, his hands were still on my shoulders, where they'd been all along, only he was holding me at arm's distance away from him, and looking at me curiously.

"It really was, wasn't it?" he said.

"What?" I tried to say, but the sound didn't come out. I took a breath and "Was what?" I croaked.

"The first time." He smiled suddenly, and it was like the sun coming up in the morning, and then his arms went all the way around me. I don't know whether he moved over on the seat, or I did, or both of us. "Oh, baby, baby," he whispered in my ear, and then there was the second time.

The second time was like the first, and also like dancing, and some ways like the bathtub. This time none of me melted away; it was all there, and all close to him, and all warm, and all tingling with sensations. I was more completely alive right then than I had ever been before in my life.

After we stopped kissing each other, we stayed very still, holding on to each other, for a while, and then he moved away just a little, enough, to breathe better.

I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to get out of the car. I didn't even want to be separated from him by the two or three inches between us on the seat. But he was sitting next to me now, staring straight ahead, not saying anything, and I just didn't know what came next. On television, the kiss was always the end of the scene.

He started the car again.

I said, "I have to ... my car ... I...."

"We'll come back," he said. "Don't worry about it. We'll come back. Let's just drive a little...?" he pulled out past my car, and turned and looked at me for a minute. "You don't want to go now, do you? Right away?"

I shook my head, but he wasn't looking at me any more, so I took a breath and said out loud, "No."

We came off a twisty street onto the highway. "So that's how it hits you," he said. He wasn't exactly talking to me; more like thinking out loud. "Twenty-seven years a cool cat, and now it has to be a crazy little midget that gets to you." He had to stop then, for a red light--the same light I'd stopped at the first time on the way in. That seemed a long long time before.

Larry turned around and took my hand. He looked hard at my face, "I'm sorry, hon. I didn't mean that the way it sounded."

"What?" I said. "What do you mean?" I hadn't even tried to make sense out of what he was saying before; he wasn't talking to me anyhow.

"Kid," he said, "maybe that was the first time for you, but in a different way it was the first time for me too." His hand opened and closed around mine, and his mouth opened and closed too, but nothing came out. The light was green; he noticed, and started moving, but it turned red again. This time he kept watching it.

"I don't suppose anybody ever told you about the birds and the bees and the butterflies," he said.

"Told me _what_ about them?" He didn't answer right away, so I thought about it. "All I can think of is they all have wings. They all fly."

"So do I. So does a fly. What I mean is ... the hell with it!" He turned off the highway, and we went up a short hill and through a sort of gateway between two enormous rocks. "Have you ever been here?" he asked.

"I don't think so...."

"They call it The Garden of the Gods. I don't know why. I like it here ... it's a good place to drive and think."

There was a lot of moonlight, and the Garden was all hills and drops and winding roads between low-growing brush, and everywhere, as if the creatures of some giant planet had dropped them, were those towering rocks, their shapes scooped out and chiseled and hollowed and twisted by wind, water and sand. Yes, it was lovely, and it was non-intrusive. Just what he said--a good place to drive and think.

Once he came to the top of a hill, and stopped the car, and we looked out over the Garden, spreading out in every direction, with the moonlight shadowed in the sagebrush, and gleaming off the great rocks. Then we turned and looked at each other, and he reached out for me and kissed me again; after which he pulled away as if the touch of me hurt him, and grabbed hold of the wheel with a savage look on his face, and raced the motor, and raised a cloud of dust on the road behind us.

I didn't understand, and I felt hurt. I wanted to stop again. I wanted to be kissed again. I didn't like sitting alone on my side of the seat, with that growl in his throat not quite coming out.

I asked him to stop again. He shook his head, and made believe to smile.

"I'll buy you a book," he said. "All about the birds and the bees and a little thing we have around here we call sex. I'll buy it tomorrow, and you can read it--you _do_ know how to read, don't you?--and then we'll take another ride, and we can park if you want to. Not tonight, baby."

"But I _know_...." I started, and then had sense enough to stop. I knew about sex; but what I knew about it didn't connect with kissing or parking the car, or sitting close ... and it occurred to me that maybe it did, and maybe there was a lot I _didn't_ know that wasn't on Television, and wasn't on the Ship's reference tapes either. Morals and mores, and nuances of behavior. So I shut up, and let him take me back to the hotel again, to my own car.

He leaned past me to open the door on my side, but he couldn't quite make it, and I had my fourth kiss. Then he let go again, and almost pushed me out of the car; but when I started to close the door behind me, he called out, "Tomorrow night?"

"I ... all right," I said. "Yes. Tomorrow night."

"Can I pick you up?"

There was no reason not to this time. The first time I wouldn't tell him where I lived, because I knew I'd have to change places, and I didn't know where yet. I told him the name of the motel, and where it was.

"Six o'clock," he said.

"All right."

"Good night."

"Good night."

* * * * *

I don't remember driving back to my room. I think I slept on the bed that night, without ever stopping to determine whether it was comfortable or not. And when I woke up in the morning, and looked out the window at a white-coated landscape, the miracle of snow (which I had never seen before; not many planets have as much water vapor in their atmospheres as Earth does.) in summer weather seemed trivial in comparison to what had happened to me.

Trivial, but beautiful. I was afraid it would be very cold, but it wasn't.

I had gathered, from the weather-talk in the place where I ate breakfast, that in this mountain-country (it was considered to be very high altitude there), snow at night and hot sun in the afternoon was not infrequent in the month of April, though it was unusual for May.

It was beautiful to look at, and nice to walk on, but it began melting as soon as the sun was properly up, and then it looked awful. The red dirt there is pretty, and so is the snow, but when they began merging into each other in patches and muddy spots, it was downright ugly.

Not that I cared. I ate oatmeal and drank milk and nibbled at a piece of toast, and tried to plan my activities for the day. To the library first, and take back the book they'd lent me. Book ... all right then, get a book on sex. But that was foolish; I _knew_ all about sex. At least I knew ... well, what did I know? I knew their manner of reproduction, and....

Just why, at that time and place, I should have let it come through to me, I don't know. I'd managed to stay in a golden daze from the time in the Garden till that moment, refusing to think through the implications of what Larry said.

Sex. Sex is mating and reproduction. Dating and dancing and kissing are parts of the courtship procedure. And the television shows all stop with kissing, because the mating itself is taboo. Very simple. Also _very_ taboo.

Of course, they didn't _say_ I couldn't. They never said anything about it at all. It was just obvious. It wouldn't even work. We were _different_, after all.

Oh, technically, biologically, of course, we were probably cross-fertile, but....

The whole thing was so obviously _impossible_!

They should have warned me. I'd never have let it go this far, if I'd known.

Sex. Mating. Marriage. Tribal rites. Rituals and rigamaroles, and stay here forever. Never go back.

Never go back?

There was an instant's sheer terror, and then the comforting knowledge that they wouldn't _let_ me do that. I had to go back.

Baby on a spaceship?

Well, _I_ was a baby on a spaceship, but that was different. How different? I was older. I wasn't born there. Getting born is complicated. Oxygen, gravity, things like that. You can't raise a _human_ baby on a spaceship.... _Human?_ What's human? What am I? Never mind the labels. It would be _my_ baby....

I didn't want a baby. I just wanted Larry to hold me close to him and kiss me.

* * * * *

I drove downtown and on the way to the library I passed a bookstore, so I stopped and went in there instead. That was better. I could buy what I wanted, and not have to ask permission to take it out, and if there was more than one, I could have all I wanted.

I asked the man for books about sex. He looked so startled, I realized the taboo must apply on the verbal level too.

I didn't care. He showed me where the books were, and that's all that mattered. "Non-fiction here," he said. "That what you wanted, Miss?"

Non-fiction. Definitely. I thanked him, and picked out half a dozen different books. One was a survey of sexual behavior and morals; another was a manual of techniques; one was on the psychology of sex, and there was another about abnormal sex, and one on physiology, and just to play safe, considering the state of my own ignorance, one that announced itself as giving a "clear simple explanation of the facts of life for adolescents."

I took them all to the counter, and paid for them, and the man still looked startled, but he took the money. He insisted on wrapping them up, though, before I could leave.

* * * * *

The next part of this is really Larry's story, but unable as I am,

even now, to be _certain_ about his unspoken thoughts, I can only tell it as I experienced it. I didn't do anything all that day, except wade through the books I'd bought, piece-meal, reading a few pages here and a chapter there. The more I read, the more confused I got. Each writer contradicted all the others, except in regard to the few basic biological facts that I already knew. The only real addition to my factual knowledge was the information in the manual of technique about contraception--and that was rather shocking, even while it was tempting.

The mechanical contrivances these people made use of were foolish, of course, and typical of the stage of culture they are going through. If I wanted to prevent conception, while engaging in an act of sexual intercourse, I could, do so, of course, but....

The shock to the glandular system wouldn't be too severe; it was the psychological repercussions I was thinking about. The idea of pursuing a course of action whose sole motivation was the procreative urge, and simultaneously to decide by an act of will to refuse to procreate....

I _could_ do it, theoretically, but in practice I knew I never would.

I put the book down and went outside in the afternoon sunshine. The motel was run by a young married couple, and I watched the woman come out and put her baby in the playpen. She was laughing and talking to it; she looked happy; so did the baby.

But _I_ wouldn't be. Not even if they let me. I couldn't live here and bring up a child--children?--on this primitive, almost barbaric, world. Never ever be able fully to communicate with anyone. Never, ever, be entirely honest with anyone.

Then I remembered what it was like to be in Larry's arms, and wondered what kind of communication I could want that might surpass that. Then I went inside and took a shower and began to dress for the evening.

It was too early to get dressed. I was ready too soon. I went out and got in the car, and pulled out onto the highway and started driving. I was halfway up the mountain before I knew where I was going, and then I doubled my speed.

I was scared. I ran away.

* * * * *

There was still some snow on the mountain top. Down below, it would be warm yet, but up there it was cold. The big empty house was full of dust and chill and I brought fear in with me. I wished I had known where I was going when I left my room; I wanted my coat. I wanted something to read while I waited. I remembered the library book and

almost went back. Instead, I went to the dark room in back that had once been somebody's kitchen, and opened the cupboard and found the projector and yelled for help.

I didn't know where they were, how far away, whether cruising or landed somewhere, or how long it would take. All I could be sure of was that they couldn't come till after dark, full dark, and that would be, on the mountain top, at least another four hours.

There was a big round black stove in a front room, that looked as if it could burn wood safely. I went out and gathered up everything I could find nearby that looked to be combustible, and started a fire, and began to feel better. I beat the dust off a big soft chair, and pulled it over close to the stove, and curled up in it, warm and drowsy and knowing that help was on the way.

I fell asleep, and I was in the car with Larry again, in front of that hotel, every cell of my body tinglingly awake, and I woke up, and moved the chair farther back away from the fire, and watched the sun set through the window--till I fell asleep again, and dreamed again, and when I woke, the sun was gone, but the mountain top was brightly lit. I had forgotten about the moon.

I tried to remember what time it rose and when it set, but all I knew was it had shone as bright last night in the Garden of the Gods.

I walked around, and went outside, and got more wood, and when it was hot in the room again, I fell asleep, and Larry's hands were on my shoulders, but he wasn't kissing me.

He was shouting at me. He sounded furious, but I couldn't feel any anger. "You God-damn little idiot!" he shouted. "What in the name of all that's holy...? ... put you over my knee and.... For God's sake, baby," he stopped shouting, "what did you pull a dumb trick like this for?"

"I was scared. I didn't even plan to do it. I just did."

"Scared? My God, I should think you would be! Now listen, babe. I don't know yet what's going on, and I don't think I'm going to like it when I find out. I don't like it already that you told me a pack of lies last night. Just the same, God help me, I don't think it's what it sounds like. But I'm the only one who doesn't. Now you better give it to me straight, because they've got half the security personnel of this entire area out hunting for you, and nobody else is going to care much what the truth is. My God, on top of everything else, you had to _run away_! Now, give out, kid, and make it good. This one has got to stick."

I didn't understand a lot of what he said. I started trying to

explain, but he wouldn't listen. He wanted something else, and I didn't know what.

Finally, he made me understand.

He'd almost believed my story the night before. Almost, but there was a detail somewhere that bothered him. He couldn't remember it at first; it kept nudging around the edge of his mind, but he didn't know what it was. He forgot about it for a while. Then, in the Garden, I made my second big mistake. (He didn't explain all of this then; he just accused, and I didn't understand this part completely until later.) I wanted him to park the car.

Any girl on Earth, no matter how sheltered, how inexperienced, would have known better than that. As he saw it, he had to decide whether I was just so carried away by the night and the mood and the moment that I didn't _care_--or whether my apparent innocence was a pose all along.

When we separated in front of the hotel that night, we both had to take the same road for a while. Larry was driving right behind me for a good three miles, before I turned off at the motel. And that was when he realized what the detail was that had been bothering him: my car.

The first time he saw me, I was driving a different make and model, with Massachusetts plates on it. He was sure of that, because he had copied it down when he left the luncheonette, the first time we met.

Larry had never told me very clearly about the kind of work he did. I knew it was something more or less "classified," having to do with aircraft--jet planes or experimental rockets, or something like that. And I knew, without his telling me, that the work--not just the _job_, but the work he did at it--was more important to him than anything else ever had been. More important, certainly, than he had ever expected any woman to be.

So, naturally, when he met me that day, and knew he wanted to see me again, but couldn't get my address or any other identifying information out of me, he had copied down the license number of my car, and turned it in, with my name, to the Security Officer on the Project. A man who has spent almost every waking moment from the age of nine planning and preparing to fit himself for a role in humanity's first big fling into space doesn't endanger his security status by risking involuntary contamination from an attractive girl. The little aircraft plant on the fringes of town was actually a top-secret key division in the Satellite project, and if you worked there, you took precautions.

The second time I met him at the luncheonette, he had been waiting so

long, and had so nearly given up any hope of my coming, that he was no longer watching the road or the door when I finally got there--and when he left, he was so pleased at having gotten a dinner date with me, that he didn't notice much of anything at all. Not except out of the corner of one eye, and with only the slightest edge of subconscious recognition: just enough so that some niggling detail that was out-of-place kept bothering him thereafter; and just enough so that he made a point of stopping in the Security Office again that afternoon to add my new motel address to the information he'd given them the day before.

The three-mile drive in back of my Colorado plates was just about long enough, finally, to make the discrepancy register consciously.

Larry went home and spent a bad night. His feelings toward me, as I could hardly understand at the time, were a great deal stronger, or at least more clearly defined, than mine about him. But since he was more certain just what it was he wanted, and less certain what _I_ did, every time he tried to fit my attitude in the car into the rest of what he knew, he'd come up with a different answer, and nine answers out of ten were angry and suspicious and agonizing.

"Now look, babe," he said, "you've got to see this. I trusted _you_; really, all the time, I did trust you. But I didn't trust _me_. By the time I went to work this morning, I was half-nuts. I didn't know _what_ to think, that's all. And I finally sold myself on the idea that if you were what you said you were, nobody would get hurt, and--well, if you _weren't_ on the level, I better find out, quick. You see that?"

"Yes," I said.

"Okay. So I told them about the license plates, and about--the other stuff."

"What other stuff?" What else was there? How stupid could I be?

"I mean, the--in the car. The way you--Listen, kid," he said, his face grim and demanding again. "It's still just as true as it was then. I _still_ don't know. They called me this evening, and said when they got around to the motel to question you, you'd skipped out. They also said that Massachusetts car was stolen. And there were a couple of other things they'd picked up that they wouldn't tell me, but they've got half the National Guard and all the Boy Scouts out after you by now. They wanted me to tell them anything I could think of that might help them find this place. I couldn't think of anything while I was talking to them. Right afterwards, I remembered plenty of things--which roads you were familiar with, and what you'd seen before and what you hadn't, stuff like that, so--"

"So you--?"

"So I came out myself. I wanted to find you first. Listen, babe, I love you. Maybe I'm a sucker, and maybe I'm nuts, and maybe I-don't-know-what. But I figured maybe I could find out more, and easier on you, than they could. And honey, it better be good, because I don't think I've got what it would take to turn you in, and now I've found you--"

He let it go there, but that was plenty. He was willing to listen. He wanted to believe in me, because he wanted me. And finding me in the house I'd described, where I'd said it was, had him half-convinced. But I still had to explain those Massachusetts plates. And I couldn't.

I was psychologically incapable of telling him another lie, now, when I knew I would never see him again, that this was the last time I could ever possibly be close to him in any way. I couldn't estrange myself by lying.

* * * * *

And I was _also_ psychologically incapable--I found out--of telling the truth. They'd seen to that.

It was the first time I'd ever hated them. The first time, I suppose, that I fully realized my position with them.

I could not tell the truth, and I would not tell a lie; all I could do was explain this, and hope he would believe me. I could explain, too, that I was no spy, no enemy; that those who had prevented me from telling what I wanted to tell were no menace to his government or his people.

He believed me.

It was just that simple. He believed me, because I suppose he knew, without knowing how he knew it, that it was truth. Humans are not incapable of communication; they are simply unaware of it.

I told him, also, that they were coming for me, that I had called them, and--regretfully--that he had better leave before they came.

"You said they weren't enemies or criminals. You were telling the truth, weren't you?"

"Yes, I was. They won't _harm_ you. But they might...." I couldn't say it. I didn't know the words when I tried to say it. _Might take you away with them ... with us...._

"Might what?"

"Might ... oh, I don't _know_!"

Now he was suspicious again. "All right," he said. "I'll leave. You come with me."

It was just that simple. Go back with him. Let them come and not find me. What could they do? Their own rules would keep them from hunting for me. They couldn't come down among the people of Earth. Go back. Stop running.

We got into his car, and he turned around and smiled at me again, like the other time.

I smiled back, seeing him through a shiny kind of mist which must have been tears. I reached for him, and he reached for me at the same time.

When we let go, he tried to start the car, and it wouldn't work. Of course. I'd forgotten till then. I started laughing and crying at the same time in a sort of a crazy way, and took him back inside and showed him the projector. They'd forgotten to give me any commands about not doing that, I guess. Or they thought it wouldn't matter.

It did matter. Larry looked it over, and puzzled over it a little, and fooled around, and asked me some questions. I didn't have much technical knowledge, but I knew what it did, and he figured out the way it did it. Nothing with an electro-magnetic motor was going to work while that thing was turned on, not within a mile or so in any direction. And there wasn't any way to turn it off. It was a homing beam, and it was on to stay--foolproof.

That was when he looked at me, and said slowly, "You got here three days ago, didn't you, babe?"

I nodded.

"There was--God-damn it, it's too foolish! There was a--a _flying saucer_ story in the paper that day. Somebody saw it land on a hilltop somewhere. Some crackpot. Some ... how about it, kid?"

I couldn't say yes and I couldn't say no, and I did the only thing that was left, which was to get hysterical. In a big way.

He had to calm me down, of course. And I found out why the television shows stop with the kiss. The rest is very private and personal.

* * * * *

_Author's note: This story was dictated to me by a five-year-old boy--word-for-word, except for a very few editorial changes of my own.

He is a very charming and bright youngster who plays with my own five-year-old daughter. One day he wandered into my office, and watched me typing for a while, then asked what I was doing. I answered (somewhat irritably, because the children are supposed to stay out of the room when I'm working) that I was trying to write a story._

"_What kind of a story?_"

"_A grown-up story._"

"_But what_ kind?"

"A science-fiction story." The next thing I was going to do was to call my daughter, and ask her to take her company back to the playroom. I had my mouth open, but I never got a syllable out. Teddy was talking.

"I don't know where they got the car," he said. "They made three or four stops before the last...." He had a funny look on his face, and his eyes were glazed-looking.

I had seen some experimental work with hypnosis and post-hypnotic performance. After the first couple of sentences, I led Teddy into the living-room, and switched on the tape-recorder. I left it on as long as he kept talking. I had to change tapes once, and missed a few more sentences. When he was done, I asked him, with the tape still running, where he had heard that story.

"What story?" he asked. He looked perfectly normal again.

"_The story you just told me._"

He was obviously puzzled.

"_The_ science-fiction _story_," _I said_.

"I don't know where they got the car," he began; his face was set and his eyes were blank.

I kept the tape running, and picked up the parts I'd missed before. Then I sent Teddy off to the playroom, and played back the tape, and thought for a while.

There was a little more, besides what you've read. Parts of it were confused, with some strange words mixed in, and with sentences half-completed, and a feeling of ambivalence or censorship or inhibition of some kind preventing much clarity. Other parts were quite clear. Of these, the only section I have omitted so far that seems to me to belong in the story is this one:--

* * * * *

The baby will have to be born on Earth! They have decided that themselves. And for the first time, I am glad that they cannot communicate with me as perfectly as they do among themselves. I can think some things they do not know about.

We are not coming back. I do not think that I will like it on Earth for very long, and I do not know--neither does Larry--what will happen to us when the Security people find us, and we cannot answer their questions. But--

I am a woman now, and I love like a woman. Larry will not be their pet; so I cannot be. I am not sure that I am fit to be what Larry thinks of as a "human being." He says I must learn to be "my own master." I am not at all sure I could do this, if it were necessary, but fortunately, this is one of Larry's areas of semantic confusion. The feminine of _master_ is _mistress_, which has various meanings.

Also, there is the distinct possibility, from what Larry says, that we will not, _either_ of us, be allowed even as much liberty as we have here.

There is also the matter of gratitude. _They_ brought me up, took care of me, taught me, loved me, gave me a way of life, and a knowledge of myself, infinitely richer than I could ever have had on Earth. Perhaps they even saved my life, healing me when I was quite possibly beyond the power of Earthly medical science to save. But against all this--

They caused the damage to start with. It was _their_ force-field that wrecked the car and killed my parents. _They_ have paid for it; _they_ are paying for it yet. _They_ will continue to pay, for more years than make sense in terms of a human lifetime. _They_ will continue to wander from planet to planet and system to system, because _they_ have broken _their_ own law, and now may never go home.

But _I_ can.

I am a woman, and Larry is a man. We will go home and have our baby. And perhaps the baby will be the means of our freedom, some day. If we cannot speak to save ourselves, he may some day be able to speak for us.

I do not think the blocks they set in us will penetrate my womb as my own thoughts, I hope, already have.

* * * * *

_Author's note: Before writing this story--as a story--I talked with Johnny's parents. I approached them cautiously. His mother is a big

woman, and a brunette. His father is a friendly fat redhead. I already knew that neither of them reads science-fiction. The word is not likely to be mentioned in their household._

They moved to town about three years ago. Nobody here knew them before that, but there are rumors that Johnny is adopted. They did not volunteer any confirmation of that information when I talked to them, and they did not pick up on any of the leads I offered about his recitation.

Johnny himself is small and fair-haired. He takes after his paternal grandmother, his mother says....

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